

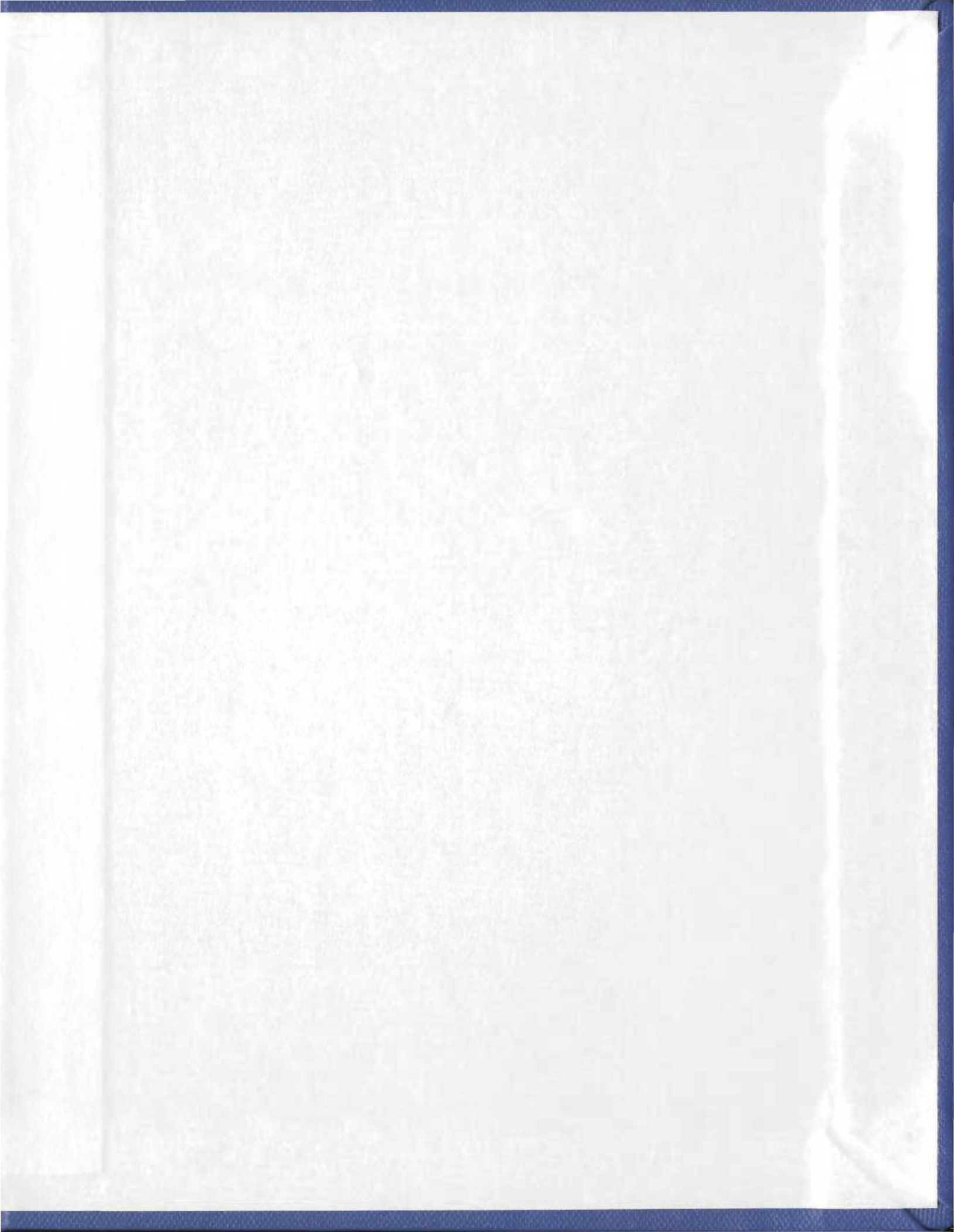
A STUDY OF VOICE IN THE WRITINGS OF  
DORA RUSSELL

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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TARA GWEN HARRIS











A STUDY OF VOICE IN THE WRITINGS OF DORA RUSSELL

by

Tara Gwen Harris

A thesis submitted to the  
School of Graduate Studies  
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## ABSTRACT

In 1945 Dora (Oake) Russell became the first Woman's Editor of the Evening Telegram. This thesis focuses on four of the columns she wrote during her four years with the Telegram: a daily Editorial, "The Woman's Angle"; a daily fictional diary column, "Day By Day"; a profile column, "Woman of the Week"; and a fictional column called "Spectatler." Russell's writing voice is examined within the framework of "feminist poststructuralist theory." Such an examination includes discussion of the social and cultural forces which shaped Russell's voice.

An analysis of Russell's writing voice reveals the duality inherent in the voice of a woman writing within patriarchal society and language. An examination of Russell's use of language and rhetorical techniques reveals the "double-voiced discourse" of the woman writer. The impact of genre and audience on Russell's writing voice is also a focus of this thesis. Because Russell wrote in a wide spectrum of genres including editorial, profile, fictional diary, short fiction, drama, and straight political reporting, her work provides great opportunity to explore not only what each genre offers the woman writer, but how the writer uses each genre. Audience, of course, is an important factor as well. There is much evidence to



suggest that Russell's voice changes according to both genre and audience.

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# PREFACE:

With the notable exception of Margaret Duley, women writers in Newfoundland have received little scholarly attention.<sup>1</sup> This thesis purports to redress this situation by focusing on a relatively unknown woman writer whose works contain feminist ideologies. Dora Russell (1912-1986) wrote in several genres, and the pre-Confederation, post-World War II era in which she wrote was one of great change both for Newfoundland and Newfoundland women. Her work reveals the tension between emerging feminist values and the values of the dominant patriarchal society.

During her four years as Woman's Editor with the Evening Telegram, Russell's contribution was significant.

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<sup>1</sup> Critical works on the life and writing of Margaret Duley include Alison Feder's book Margaret Duley: Newfoundland Novelist: A Biographical and Critical Study (1983), a chapter in Patrick O'Flaherty's The Rock Observed (1979), papers by Alison Feder (1980), Margaret Ann Maher (1973), Elizabeth Miller (1993), Clara Joan Murphy (1982), Patrick O'Flaherty (1977 and 1978), Vernon Blair Rhodenizer (1965), Agnes M. Richard (1985), George Story (1975), and Linda Whalen (1975). Margaret Duley was also the subject of Joan Penney's 1986 Masters thesis, "'Literature of the Colonized': Feminist Perspective in the Novels of Margaret Duley."

Unlike many other "Women's Pages" in Canadian post-war newspapers, her "Page for Women" included more than the typical syndicated columns. A survey of the St. John's Daily News, Digby Courier, Regina Leader Post, Lethbridge Herald, Manchester Guardian, Moncton Times, Moncton Transcript, Peterborough Examiner, Hamilton Spectator, Globe and Mail, Vancouver Sun, Halifax Herald, Cape Breton Post, and the London Times between 1945 and 1949 reveals that of those papers which contained Women's Pages, the vast majority of columns were syndicated. In addition to the usual advice, recipe, horoscope, and social events columns published in other Women's Pages, Russell provided her readers with a strong, local woman's voice through several columns which she wrote herself: a daily Editorial, "The Woman's Angle"; a daily fictional diary column, "Day by Day"; and a profile column, "Woman of the Week"; and a fictional column called "Spec-tatler."

Since these four columns form the bulk of her collected material, they will be the focus of this thesis. Additional works of short fiction and non-fiction pieces which relate to topics and themes examined will also be used to explore Russell's writing voice.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps its most striking

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<sup>2</sup> The Ted and Dora Russell Collection in the Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archives contains a group of short

feature is a strong feminist outlook: the promotion and support of local women in political, business, volunteerism, and domestic roles; the focus on issues relevant to women readers; and the emphasis on the activities of the local women's community, as well as coverage of the activities of

---

stories and play scripts. With the exception of "Labrador Wedding," evidence has not been located to prove that any of her short fiction was published. Similarly, no evidence has been located to prove that her plays were produced (Miller, Letter 26 March 1994, Canadian Periodical Index, Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Wigh). A number of the archive copies of Russell's short fiction and drama, however, appear to be carbons, suggesting that the originals may have been submitted to magazines, publishers, or literary contests. We do know that in 1974 Dora Russell won second prize in the Margaret Duley Fiction Contest, sponsored by the Newfoundland Writers' Guild. Unfortunately, the name of her winning entry is not noted. There is reason to speculate, however, that "One Good Turn" (8.10) may have been Russell's winning entry since the draft preserved in the CNS Archives has "No. 47" written in the upper right hand corner. Writers' Guild records of the contest have Russell's entry listed and number 47 ("Literary Prize Awarded" and "Newfoundland Writers' Guild" file 4.01.004).

the larger social and political community from a woman's perspective.

## CHAPTER 1: BIOGRAPHY AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 1912 Dora (Oake) Russell was born in Change Islands, the daughter of Jesse and Laura (Brinson) Oake. When she was one and a half years old her family moved to St. John's where her father operated a grocery store on Casey Street and later Gower Street ("Local Author dead at 73" Evening Telegram 1986). Russell often returned to Change Islands by steamer for summer visits. Educated at Bishop Spencer College, she received two years of teacher's summer school beyond her grade eleven diploma. In a short journal written in 1978 for her daughter, Dr. Elizabeth Miller, in preparation for Miller's biography of Ted Russell, Dora reports that she taught school for one year before marrying Edward (Ted) Russell. Specifically, she taught at St. Mary's Anglican school in the West End-Waterford area of St. John's (Miller, Letter 26 March 1994). On January 6, 1935 she married Ted at St. Andrew's Chapel of St. Thomas' church.

Dora met Ted during the summer of 1933 outside the office of Dr. Blackall, Superintendent of Education. Dora was, at the time, looking for her first teaching position while Ted was present to confirm his appointment at Bishop Feild College in St. John's. Dora remembers the meeting as follows:

While waiting outside Blackall's office, I sat



beside this very personable young man and we engaged in conversation about why each of us was there. My cousin George Earle happened along and greeted us both. After this introduction I went home and told my mother, and she suggested I ask this man to supper. He came, and we had a very nice evening. After the last piece I played for him on the piano, I told him "That one was to tell you I hope you'll come again sometime"--a little bit forward on my part, in those times. (qtd. in Miller, Life & Times 54-55) 4

Married in 1935, with only eighty dollars between them, Ted and Dora lived with her parents on Queen's Road until Ted was appointed magistrate in Springdale in 1935 (Miller, Life & Times 56). The Russells spent four years in Springdale; here Dora had difficulty making the many adjustments from city life. Among these was a sense of uncertainty about the role she was expected to play in the community as the magistrate's wife. "Eventually," she reported, "I found it amounted to merely being President of this or that" (qtd. in Miller, Life & Times 76). In general she found the social mores of the community frustrating:

Some of the local attitudes were stifling.

Dancing was not tolerated, nor card playing. One had to draw the blinds if playing cards. Later

when I was better established, a handful of us women decided to use a barn and I was to teach them to waltz and foxtrot. We had fun, but only for a while until we learned we were not to use the barn! (qtd. in Miller, Life & Times 76)

Also among the difficulties Russell contended with in Springdale was her husband's position as magistrate. "The image of the 'long-faced Russell' disturbed his wife; indeed, Dora was never completely happy about her husband's job as a magistrate" (Miller, Life & Times 79). She felt that his position "altered his personality, making him sterner and more inexorable" (qtd. in Miller, Life & Times 79).

During their years in Springdale their first two daughters, Rhona (1936) and Elizabeth (1939), were born. Dora travelled to St. John's for both births: "In each case . . . I had to go to St. John's for the birth, I couldn't stand the looks of the local midwife who had permanently dirty fingernails and three layers of grimy petticoats underlaying a rusty-black dress" (qtd. in Miller, Life & Times 77). Travel to St. John's for the second birth included a forty mile trip to the train at Badger by dog team, as well as a similar venture on the way home with an infant. Later that year Ted was transferred to Harbour Breton and the family spent a little over a year in that

community. On December 2, 1940 the family arrived at their next post in Bonne Bay. Here two more daughters were born, June in 1941 and Peggy in 1942 (Miller, Life & Times 83). Their son Kelly was born in St. John's in 1956 when Dora Russell was forty-four years of age.

As recorded by Miller, "The three years the Russells spent in Bonne Bay were very eventful years for Newfoundland. The Second World War was brought very close to home with the loss of the *Caribou* in October, 1941" and "in December of 1942, news came about the Knights of Columbus fire in St. John's" (Miller, Life & Times 84). The *Caribou*, a passenger ferry, was attacked and sunk by a German submarine on October 14, 1942. One hundred and one of the two hundred, thirty-eight passengers survived. Tragedy struck the island again when one hundred people died and one hundred and seven more were injured in the December 12, 1942 Knights of Columbus fire which appeared to have resulted from arson; enemy sabotage was suspected.

World War II, then, brought great change to Newfoundland, changes which are relevant to a study of Dora Russell's writing. Not only did the country participate in the war effort by sending volunteers overseas, but because of its geographic location, St. John's became "a key port in the battle of the Atlantic" (Rowe 434). The city was one of the bases used by naval units doing convoy duty and saw a

steady flow of servicemen. The eastern coast of the island also had some unfortunate contact with German U-boats (Rowe 434-435). The war also brought military bases, constructed predominantly by the Americans. These brought an influx of American servicemen, employment for Newfoundlanders, and general improvement to the island's economy (White 12-14). In short, the war provided economic prosperity that was in sharp contrast with the poverty of the 1930s and established relationships with Canada and the United States that would help lead to Confederation (White 20).

The Second World War brought change to the lives of women in Newfoundland. Approximately seven thousand Newfoundland volunteers served in World War II. Nearly nine hundred were killed (Eggleston 11). In the outports the absence of men meant that many women took over men's jobs (White 6). Other women, as illustrated by Russell's "Woman of the Week" column, joined the war effort and travelled to the front lines as nurses and radio operators,<sup>1</sup> while still others mobilized at home. Russell's profile columns and Margaret Duley's Caribou Hut indicate that the Women's Patriotic Association which had been active during the First World War resumed duties. The WPA provided many forms of

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<sup>1</sup>Two hundred and sixty Newfoundland women served in the Women's Division of the RCAF (Rowe 433).

help and hospitality for foreign servicemen through the Caribou Hut hostel in St. John's.

In July 1943 Ted was invited to St. John's by the Commissioner for Natural Resources, P. Douglas H. Dunn, to discuss the possibility of a job with the Co-operative Division. On August 7 he accepted the position and the family returned to the city. Shortly after their return from Bonne Bay the Russells found themselves both witnesses to and participants in the tumultuous politics that dominated the last years of the Commission of Government.

In February of 1934 Commission of Government was established and governed Newfoundland until March 31, 1949. This government consisted of a Governor, along with three British and three Newfoundland Commissioners (Rowe 405). The Commission had been established because of the island's dire economic situation; Newfoundland was bankrupt with no one prepared to lend more money. As a result, Responsible Government was suspended and the Commission was established to reconstruct the finances and politics of the country (Rowe 403).

According to the terms of Commission of Government, once the country was self-supporting, self government would be restored. However, while Newfoundland had managed to achieve a balanced budget several years before the National Convention was established, there had been no organized

request for the reinstatement of self-government. It was the British Government, led by Prime Minister Clement Attlee, which decided on December 11, 1943 that a National Convention would be the best way of establishing the new form of government desired by the people.

Delegates were elected on June 21, 1946. The Convention opened in September and proceedings continued for almost sixteen months. The purpose of the Convention was twofold. First it was to establish if, after 15 years of government by Commission, Newfoundland was in a financial position to be self-supporting. Secondly, it was to recommend possible future forms of government for the island. These would be voted on by the people in a national referendum.

During this time, specifically from 1945 to 1949, Dora Russell was a columnist with the St. John's daily paper The Evening Telegram. In her own words, "They had never had a woman's editor and I suggested it was high time. They agreed" (Russell, Journal). She began work with the St. John's paper not long after returning to the city. According to her daughter, Elizabeth Miller:

I think she really got into it [writing] after the family moved into St. John's after many years in outports. I don't think she was especially fond of outport life, and felt constrained by it.



Certainly the idea of a woman working would have been outrageous (plus there were no jobs to work at outside of the flakes!).<sup>2</sup> She was not long settled in St. John's before she started working in spite of the fact that she had four small children. (Miller, Letter 26 March 1994)

Russell arranged daycare through live-in maids and set out into the paid workforce. Under the "Acknowledgements" in Day by Day: Pages from the Diary of a Newfoundland Woman, Russell writes, "My years with the 'Tely' are among my happiest" (iv). Unlike many working women of her day, Russell did not work because of economic necessity, but rather because she enjoyed it. Her daughter speculates:

I think she was a very creative person who desperately needed this outlet. I think she needed to assert herself as a person, rather than just the wife of a magistrate, a director, a cabinet minister, etc. You know, over the years this all affected her significantly . . . . [S]he did develop a drinking

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<sup>2</sup>The Dictionary of Newfoundland English defines "flake" as "a platform built on poles and spread with boughs for drying cod-fish on the foreshore" (187). In the outports women were often responsible for the process of drying fish on the flakes.

problem, in later life, and I think this was her "Madwoman in the attic", the result of her inability to completely set free her creative spirit. (Miller, Letter 26 March 1994)

The political happenings in Newfoundland during this tumultuous era were a preoccupation of Dora Russell and a great deal of her creative energy was directed toward political thought and political writing. The proceedings of the National Convention were obviously of great interest to Russell since her columns commented on daily political events; she was also the reporter assigned to cover the Convention's sessions for The Evening Telegram. According to Miller, she was "an ardent Confederate from the outset" (Miller, Life & Times 104). After four years she resigned her post at the Telegram due to "high feelings on both sides regarding Confederation." "I felt that the Evening Telegram was sitting on the fence, when I ardently wanted things done to bring about Confederation. I resigned because of this" (Russell, Journal). Russell also wrote articles for The Confederate.<sup>3</sup> This paper was a weekly

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<sup>3</sup> Russell's name does not appear in The Confederate. This, however, is not surprising since many of the articles in The Confederate appear without by-lines. It is also possible that Russell would have written anonymously to protect her

publication of the Newfoundland Confederate Association, between April 1948 and July 1948 (Madden). She also "spoke on radio in support of the cause, was active in rallies and meetings, and was a member of the Women's Confederation Committee" (Miller, Life & Times 141). Her husband, Ted Russell, on the other hand, initially voted for Commission of Government and only supported Confederation later when he realized that Commission of Government was a lost cause (Miller, Life & Times 104). In a second referendum Confederation won with 52.3% of the vote and Newfoundland became Canada's tenth province in 1949.

Although Ted had been a reluctant supporter of Confederation, in 1949 he became part of the new Smallwood Liberal government. It seems that Dora also had political ambitions, though these were never realized. In a 1949 diary entry, she wrote:

I'd been down to see him [Joe Smallwood] that very morning, wanting a district. I had a good chance of getting Fogo but Joe decided that two in a family was too much. I might not have got it anyway. Joe was afraid women in politics was too revolutionary. (qtd. in Miller, Life & Times 123)

Any hope Dora Russell may have had about entering politics

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policy of unbiased political reporting at the Telegram.

was probably shattered after Ted's resignation from the Smallwood cabinet in 1951. His resignation sparked the wrath of Smallwood and his supporters; there is evidence suggesting that someone in the Smallwood camp deliberately attempted to keep Ted and Dora from gaining permanent employment after his resignation (Miller, Life & Times 136-140). Even if all had gone well, it seems that Dora's allegiances lay more with the democratic socialism as reflected in the policies of the federal C.C.F. party than with Liberal ideology (Miller, Life & Times 141).

The period after Ted's resignation from the cabinet was difficult for the family both socially and financially. They found themselves ostracized by their previous friends and social network. They also had difficulty finding and maintaining employment. Eventually Ted found a salesman's position with Crown Life Insurance. During these years in the 1950s he did much of his writing:

Drawing upon his considerable previous experience as a radio commentator while Director of Co-operatives, Russell now began broadcasting on the local CBC, speaking as the outport character "Uncle Mose." Selling insurance, he commented dryly years afterwards, "left me with many unused faculties which demanded an outlet of some kind. Uncle Mose provided an ideal outlet." Between

1954 and 1960 he produced around eight hundred of these stories . . . . (O'Flaherty 157)

After five years of selling insurance Ted returned to teaching. In 1957 he accepted a teaching position at Prince of Wales College and remained there until his retirement in 1963. In September of that year he returned to Memorial University as a student and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in the spring of 1965. His main concentration was in English and upon graduation he was appointed a Sessional Lecturer with the Department of English. In 1968 he was promoted to Lecturer, in 1970 to Assistant Professor, and in 1971 to Associate Professor. In 1973 Ted Russell was granted the Degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa). Three weeks later his health forced him to give up teaching. He died in 1977 (Miller, Life & Times 207-218).

During their time in St. John's in the 1950s and 1960s, Dora pursued her interest in astronomy. In 1960 Russell joined the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada as an unattached member and five years later became a founder and the first Secretary of the St. John's Centre. Long standing member Randy Dodge remembers her as the club "matriarch," making cookies and cakes for meetings; many of these meetings were held at her home (Dodge). For much of the first twenty years of the St. John's Centre's existence she

served in some official capacity, including four years as President. She was a frequent contributor to the Centre's newsletter and over a dozen of her articles appear in the National Newsletter. From 1979 to 1986 she also wrote a weekly column "All about Stars" for the Evening Telegram's Saturday edition (Broughton 248 and 249) The column was very popular and dealt with material "in a very down-to-earth matter, mixing scientific fact with legends and lore" (Miller, Letter 7 March 1994). In the 1970s she published articles in the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada Journal, and reportedly in Sky and Telescope though these have not been located (Miller, Letter 26 March 1994). Russell also worked with the Provincial Parks Department to prepare a program and booklet for park visitors called Newfoundland Skies in Summer (Broughton 248).

Russell was recognized by the Royal Astronomical Society in 1977 with a service award. She was further remembered by the Society upon her death when they renamed their newsletter All About Stars, and named their library, to which she had donated over eighty books, the Dora Russell Library. Russell was also awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977 for her work with the Girl Guides. She had been largely responsible for creating an astronomy badge and establishing the criteria for awarding it (Broughton 248). How she became interested in astronomy is



unknown. Daughter Elizabeth Miller remembers her always having an interest in the subject which was an unusual pursuit for women at the time: "I remember going with her to a couple of meetings of the local branch of the Royal Astronomical Society and it was certainly predominantly male" (Miller, Letter 26 March 1994).

Russell's other interests included music; she taught piano lessons from her home ("Local Author Dead at 73" Evening Telegram 1986). Beyond playing and teaching piano, she loved to listen to classical music, especially choral music. After leaving the Evening Telegram she did work briefly with the Daily News. For the most part, however, Russell did not work outside the home in the 1950s and 1960s. Instead she maintained involvement with the Jubilee Guild, her church, St. Thomas' Anglican Church in St. John's, and was a member of the Senion [sic] choir for many years. During the 1950s she was also a member of the St. John's Glee Club. Elizabeth Miller notes that the groups Russell belonged to were "(certainly not women's groups as such.)" "She wanted to be part of the mainstream, I think, rather than be relegated to 'women's groups'" (Miller, Letter 26 March 1994). For the most part, Miller remembers her as being "much more of a 'home body'" during this period than she had been in the past, merely "dabbling" in activities outside the home (Miller, Letter 26 March 1994).

Russell's autobiographical account, "Labrador Wedding" illustrates her love of astronomy, her enthusiasm, spirited nature, and sense of humour. In an account of a trip to North West River, Labrador to help arrange and attend the wedding of one of her daughters, she focuses not on the wedding, but on her chance to see the Northern Lights. The story opens with Russell packing for the trip. Immediately her unconventional nature comes to light:

And I packed my binoculars, a set of 7 x 50, which I wouldn't be caught dead without, and which was my wedding dress from the daughter before.

This, I see, needs explanation.

When the daughter before this one got married (I have too many daughters to bother explaining them all) my husband gave me the money to buy myself a new gown for the wedding.

Now, already I had a dress which was quite suitable for the occasion . . . . Although I had a dress, I didn't have a set of binoculars, and I had wished for them many times . . . . So, I bought binoculars instead of a dress, and they have ever since been looked upon fondly in the family as "Mom's wedding dress". (Russell, "Labrador Wedding" 5)

On February 9, 1986 Dora Russell died at the Health

Sciences Centre, St. John's. She was seventy-three years of age and was survived by five children, eleven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren ("Local Author Dead at 73" Evening Telegram 1986). Her daughter Elizabeth Miller donated Dora Russell's papers to the Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archive where they are currently part of The Ted and Dora Russell Collection. Her material consists of her newspaper columns, short fiction, short non-fiction and drama. Four years of her editorial "The Woman's Angle" are contained in two large folders (10.03 and 10.04). Russell's profile column, "Woman of the Week," is contained in a folder holding over one hundred and ten articles (10.05). The archives also hold copies of the "Day by Day" columns (10.01 and 10.02). Russell collected and published these in 1983 under the title Day by Day: Pages from the Diary of a Newfoundland Woman. Clippings of her National Convention coverage are contained in two large scrapbooks (10.07 and 10.08). Also contained in a scrap book is her column the "Spec-tatler" (10.06).

The Ted and Dora Russell collection contains two of Dora's scripts prepared for radio: "Story of a Street" (9.01) and "The Bedlammer" (9.02), a script for a half-hour television play "Second Mama" (9.04) and a fourth script titled "Tidal Wave" (9.03). The collection's contents also include four short fiction pieces: "One Good Turn" (8.10),

"Don't Tell George" (8.07), "The Sight of Seals" (8.08) and "The Whelping Ice" (8.09). Among the shorter pieces in the collection are several autobiographical works about Russell's life as a homemaker: "Labrador Wedding" (8.01), "The Story of Peter" (8.02), "The Week Before Christmas, At Our House" (8.04), "Christmas at Our House" (8.05), and "The Twelve Days of Christmas" (8.06).

Finally, there is one non-fiction piece called "Facts About Our Superstitions" (8.03). The only pieces of correspondence in the collection are letters written to Dora Russell in the 1930s by John Lewis Paton, then President of Memorial University College (11.01). Another file called "Notes on Writing" contains pages torn out of a notebook. These pages list titles with the dates they were written, where they were submitted and whether she received payment for them (11.02). One last scrapbook contains historical clippings (11.03).

While an understanding of Russell's life is obviously important, in order to fully appreciate Russell and her writing it is also necessary to explore the historical and literary context in which she wrote. As noted earlier, the 1940s in Newfoundland were a time of great social and political change brought on by the Second World War and the National Convention. Furthermore, to understand the ideas present in Russell's work it is important to examine the

history of women in Newfoundland, particularly in St. John's. Russell's feminist ideas do not exist in isolation. Rather, her place is one in a long history of women's rights activism. According to Margot Duley's research on the women's suffrage movement in Newfoundland,

A "feminist voice" can be found as early as 1850, if by feminist one means a voice which challenged the prevailing political limitations placed upon women; and by the 1890s there was an organized push for votes for women led by the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). (Duley 10)

The suffrage movement in Newfoundland grew out of the temperance movement which rose in response to social conditions such as urban squalor, poverty, public drunkenness, wife and child abuse. Frederick Rowe explains:

Traditionally, the daily serving of rum was identified with shipboard life. Perhaps more than any other people, Newfoundlanders were mariners; thus the daily use of alcohol became an ingrained part of their culture on shore as well as on ship.

(251)

Women and children were often seen as the helpless victims of male alcoholism and the WCTU began to feel it was crucial that women have the right to vote so they could further temperance issues (Duley 13-15). The ideology of this first

1891 drive for women's suffrage, as illustrated in the language of its appeal, appears to have been quite traditional. The WCTU asked that the vote be extended to mothers, wives, and daughters; they conceptualized women "solely in relationship to men," and the notion of separate spheres was accepted (Duley 22).

While the first bid for women's suffrage was unsuccessful, a second movement rose after the First World War. During the war women in Newfoundland performed important roles. Some found their way to the battle fields as nurses and ambulance drivers, but the majority contributed heavily to the war effort at home. Women across the island coordinated their efforts through the Women's Patriotic Association. With divisions in communities all across the country, the WPA raised funds and made supplies for soldiers overseas. The pride in women's traditional roles and abilities which grew out of the WPA's activities, as well as the cross-country network established by the organization, assisted the new drive for women's suffrage which rose after the war.

In the post-World War I era the Women's Franchise League emerged. It was assisted in its goals by international connections with the International Women's Suffrage Alliance. The Alliance, for instance, ensured that Newfoundland Prime Minister Squires received negative



publicity in London during a 1922 imperial conference. As a member of the Alliance, the Franchise League received the Alliance's newsletter Jus Suffragi, and much local suffrage material was based on pieces from the publications of this larger organization (Duley 77 and 91).

Dora Russell was by no means the first woman to speak out or write about women's issues. Early suffragists like Armine Gosling presented papers at the Lady's Reading Room in St. John's (Duley 128), while others ran a publication of their own, Waterlily. Newspaper writing was also a significant part of the campaign for women's suffrage (Duley 50 and 80). On March 5 of 1923, for instance, the caption "Woman Suffrage: The Right to Vote" appeared on page four of the Evening Telegram. This writer addresses the recent M.C.L.I. (Methodist College Literary Institute) debate concerning women's suffrage: "It was decided that when women get the vote it will mean chivalry will vanish. But what kind of chivalry is it that denies justice and fair play to women?" The same issue is raised in a letter to the Editor under the heading "Women's Suffrage" (One Who was There, "Women's Suffrage" 5 March 1923).

As explained by Duley, feminists elsewhere had argued for women's rights in two ways. The first argument was in the "natural rights" tradition. The belief was that women deserved the vote and equal rights by virtue of being human.

The second was a "maternal rights" argument. Here it was believed that women deserved equal rights because of their maternal roles:

This school often argued that women were uniquely nurturing and virtuous, and that those qualities should be brought into public life to balance the more hardheaded and errant natures of men. The woman's vote was needed up uplift society. (Duley 54-55)

The Newfoundland suffrage movement was characterized mostly by a maternal feminist ideology coupled with the grievance that society did not recognize or value women's unpaid and volunteer work. Such work by women raised funds and gathered much needed resources. According to Duley, for instance, "a conservative estimate of the real value of the WPA's contributions in today's dollars in the clothing market would be \$6.5 million dollars" (Duley 68). In 1912 Armine Gosling responded to the fact that women were not recognized for such noteworthy achievements:

Then, as now, men were unappreciative of and ungrateful for the public work done by women. It has never been acknowledged at its full value, either in the industrial, social, political or religious world. Men have always been under the curious delusion that women neither expect nor

want payment, or even acknowledgement. (qtd. in Duley 130)

In March of 1925 Newfoundland women won the franchise and the right to run for office (Duley 95). The maternal feminist ideologies which were a driving force behind the movement, however, did not die with that victory. These ideologies and the complaint that women's work was not recognized or appreciated were passed down to generations of politically minded women like Dora Russell. Russell argues for women's rights both on the basis of their role as mothers and by virtue of their being human. Like her foremothers she often frames her appeals for women's expanded participation in society in the less radical language of maternal feminism as will be discussed in later chapters. Also Russell shows concern that women's work was unrecognized and unappreciated; this appears to have been the motivation behind Russell's profile column, "Woman of the Week."

To understand the place occupied by Dora Russell in the literary world of Newfoundland, it is also necessary to examine the history of journalism on the island and to understand where Russell belongs in this history. Newspaper publishing began in 1807 with the appearance of Newfoundland's first paper, the Royal Gazette and Newfoundland Advertiser (Will 126). These early papers

reported mostly foreign news, paying little attention to domestic affairs. By the late 1820s things were beginning to change; not only was there more of a focus on local issues and politics, but the papers increasingly reflected religious and political divisions. There were "intimate connections between religion, politics, and journalism" (Will 127).

[R]eaders came to expect lively and opinionated coverage of political and sectarian issues, while papers drew most of their readership (as well as financial backing) from followers of the various political factions. (Will 127)

On April 3, 1879 the first issue of the Evening Telegram appeared. It quickly became the most popular paper. By 1926 the Telegram and Daily News were the only two St. John's daily papers (Will 130). Although the dailies were supposed to have toned down their "enthusiasm for partisan politics" in the 1920s (Will 130), it seems that they were still a good distance from being objective:

In the 1920s the press was politically minded to a degree that can hardly be imagined today. In its political reporting it was prejudiced beyond belief. Reporters editorialized and everyone favourable to a party a newspaper supported was lavishly magnified. (Hollohan 29)

In 1934 Commission of Government was instituted and in the absence of party politics the two St. John's dailies adopted a more neutral reporting style. During the years of Commission of Government (1934-1946) there was little political news since Commission meetings were not open to the public. It was during this time that the papers expanded into less familiar territory, covering Canadian news, sports, and also adding women's pages, which contained mostly syndicated columns (Will 131).

Though women's pages were not introduced until the time of Commission of Government, there were women involved in writing for newspapers before this period. Before the turn of the century, for instance, businesswoman Ellen Carbery began publishing letters written during business trips to England in the Evening Telegram. Later she published poetry in almost every Newfoundland Quarterly between 1901 and 1915 (Riggs 18). Early suffrage leaders had used newspapers to advance their cause with a publicity blitz of articles to the daily papers and letters to the editor in 1920 (Duley 80). During Russell's time there was a small number of other women writing. Grace Butt, for instance, preceded Russell slightly. She began her writing career with The Daily News, for which she wrote a regular column reviewing the arts before founding the St. John's Players in 1937 (de Leon 103). She remembers Russell's work and through her

daughter, Judith Virginia Grace, reports that "it was gratifying to her, as a writer in that era, to follow Dora Russell's commentaries on cultural and issues relevant to women" (Grace). Many other writers followed Russell. Cassie Brown, for example, began her career writing newspaper articles and later worked as Woman's editor at The Daily News from 1959 to 1966 (de Leon 145).

By the time women's pages were introduced to Newfoundland papers, however, women's sections had already been part of Canadian newspapers for many years, having their genesis even before the turn of the century "when the domestic doings of home and kitchen, the problems and experiences of marriage and motherhood, and the events of high society were collected under such headings as 'the Women's World'" (Kesterton 146). In the Canadian paper the Mail, Women's pages were introduced in the 1890s as part of a strategy to gain independence from political parties by establishing commercial viability (M. Lang 82).

In the mid-1880s women were not allowed into newspaper offices at all, but Canadian women began slowly entering the profession of journalism in the late 1800s. Among these educated, middle-class women were Agnes Maule Machar of Kingston, Ontario, Sara Jeannette Duncan, "Kit" Coleman of the Toronto Mail and Empire, Agricultural editor of the Manitoba Free Press E. Cora Hind, and Kate Simpson Hayes

(Freeman 43).

In June of 1904 the Canadian Women's Press Club was founded in a CPR pullman car by thirteen Canadian women journalists returning home after covering the St. Louis World's Fair. Kathleen "Kit" Blake Coleman was the first president. Other early members were Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy and Helen McGill. The club, renamed the Media Club of Canada in 1971, has branches and members across the country (James 352).

According to Barbara Freeman's article, "'Every Stroke Upward:' Women Journalists in Canada, 1880-1906,"

The women's page offered the most opportunity for ambitious female writers because it was the only editorial department of a newspaper in which women were generally welcome. Of course, they were not treated the same as the men. . . . Very few managed to slip over the gender border into the "male" reporting areas of politics, business and crime. (Freeman 44)

Russell, however, appears to have been one of these few women who had the opportunity to report on politics. When the National Convention began sessions, the papers were once again covering local politics and providing detailed coverage of debates. It was Russell who covered the Convention news for the Telegram in the column "Convention

Proceedings." During this uncertain political time the Daily News advocated a return to responsible government although the paper's views were relatively restrained. The Evening Telegram, however, remained neutral on the issue (Will 131).

In those early years reporting in Newfoundland did not require specialized training. One of Russell's contemporaries, Albert Perlin, began his journalism career with the Evening Telegram in 1920 after finishing high school (Hollohan 20). He worked with an editorial team of three, one of whom was the editor; this was apparently the maximum staff on any paper of the time (Hollohan 21). The situation left two reporters to "survey the whole range of social, economic, and political issues" (Hollohan 19). In the words of Joseph Smallwood, who preceded Perlin at the Evening Telegram, "St. John's was divided in two . . . . One reporter took East and the other West" (Will 132).

Along with the regular news, some reporters also wrote columns on current events. Perlin, for instance, began "Our Local Pepys" in the Telegram in the 1920s and he wrote on current events as "the Wayfarer" in the Daily News after 1940. Similarly, in the 1940s Dora Russell was writing a column centred on local current events called "The Woman's Angle."

There is evidence in her work that she and Perlin read



each other's columns; each referred to the other, both agreeing and disagreeing with the other's point of view. In an editorial entitled "Women Never Never will Be Slaves," for instance, Russell corrects Perlin's assertion that women make themselves slaves to uncomfortable fashions. In "In the News" Wayfarer had asserted "Women are the slaves of fashion and if the wasp waists of Edwardian days and the long skirts of a generation ago are decreed, women, emancipated women, will wear them and suffer in what the unhappy creatures believe to be a good cause" (Perlin, "In the News: Notes and Comment" 17 Sept 1947). Russell not only corrects him in her editorial, but her fictional characters Mrs. Bloggs and Portia also make reference to Wayfarer's view. Portia says to Mrs. Bloggs, "Oh, did you read that too? . . . Men will have their little say, I suppose" (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs Reviews the News" 20 Sept. 1947). Perlin, likewise, watched Russell's columns. In the March 11, 1947 edition of "In the News" Wayfarer records a conversation he had with Russell's Mrs. Bloggs concerning whether confederation should be on the ballot paper:

"It seems, Mrs. Bloggs," we said, "that you have qualified as a constitutional expert."

With appropriate modesty she disclaimed the fond impeachment. "Dear me, nothing of the sort, I assure

you. But I do think I have a measure of good common sense to apply to political problems." (Perlin, "In the News: Conversation Piece" 11 Mar. 1947)

In the late 1940s, Russell was writing during the changed social and economic climate the Second World War brought to Newfoundland. According to Patrick O'Flaherty, these changes were reflected in the literature of the period from 1942-1948. He reports that there was present the same kind of quickened intellectual activity that characterized the first decade of the century, and the cause of this renewal was the same as in the earlier period: nationalism. The relinquishing of self-government in 1934 was a source of shame to many patriots, and now that it was obvious that a decision was imminent about the ultimate fate of the country, there was an outburst of writing full of pride and anxiety.

(149)

New magazines, such as the Courier, Newfoundland Profile, and Atlantic Guardian became the site of this literary reawakening. Ron Pollett and Arthur Scammell, a second cousin of Dora Russell who was also from Change Islands, took a nostalgic look at a way of life in the outports which was deteriorating. According to O'Flaherty, Scammell's view point consisted of "stubborn pride, manly resentment of

outsiders' misguided criticism, and a bypassing of the cruelties of outharbour life. And above all, a sense of loss" (154).

Ted Russell also contributed to this nationalistic wave of writing. Unlike Scammell and Pollett, however, he was more interested in "the living outport" and had a desire to improve life there. Despite the literary context in which she wrote, Dora Russell did not participate in this trend of literary nationalism. Her editorials focused on aspects of Newfoundland life which needed improvement, such as medical care and housing, rather than those which could be idealized. Although she thought highly of Ted's writing and was responsible for preserving much of it, Elizabeth Miller says that "[s]he did not seem to share his enthusiasm for outport life (I think she felt well rid of it)" (Miller, Letter 26 March 1994).

Despite Russell's dislike of outport life, there is evidence that she submitted folksongs to the Atlantic Guardian (Ted and Dora Russell Collection "Notes on Writing" 11.02). One of these may have been "The Lumber Camp Song" published in the November, 1948 issue. Also, works like "Facts About Our Superstitions" explore aspects of traditional life in Newfoundland. It seems, however, that Russell was more concerned that Newfoundland promote itself in the North American race to attract tourists after the

war, than with glorifying traditional outport life (Russell "Tourist Problem"). For instance, in her editorial "Tourists Off" she writes:

The "Atlantic Guardian," that splendid little magazine of Newfoundland, has probably done more during its short period of publication to make Newfoundland known abroad than has Commission Government in its lengthy tenure of office.

The Atlantic Guardian's Platform, as established in its fifth issue, May of 1945, was to "make Newfoundland better known at home and abroad; To promote trade and travel in the Island; To encourage development of Newfoundland's natural resources; To foster good relationships between Newfoundland and her neighbours" (4). It published articles like Phil H. Moore's "The Way to a Tourist's Heart" and editorials such as Ewart Young's "Tourists are on the Move."

Russell's publications in the Guardian were obviously meant to participate in this drive to promote tourism on the island. In September, October, November, and December of 1948 she contributed "Picture Stories" to the Atlantic Guardian. These consisted of photos, taken by Fred Ruggles, and captions which map out some of the most appealing tourist routes in the province. The first explores Conception Bay, the others cover Placentia, St. John's to Corner Brook by boat, and the South Coast and Fortune by

boat. Photos capture local landmarks, businesses, tourist attractions, and scenery. Captions read like a tourist manual:

Another example of the beautiful scenery to be found "around the Bay" is this scene at Avondale, at the head of Conception Bay. Its quiet rusticity is emphasized by the narrow dirt road, typical of Newfoundland's hundreds of secondary roads. (Russell, "Around the Bay" 24)

If any of Russell's writing could be categorized as nostalgic it would be selected pieces of her short fiction. Pieces like "One Good Turn," and "The Sight of Seals," are set in the outports. These often show the spirit of outport people in a positive light, however they make no attempt to hide the harsh physical environment of Newfoundland. This prevents her work from presenting an idyllic picture of life in the outports. In "The Sight of Seals," for instance, Russell describes the sea from the perspective of women on shore watching the ice carry their men out to sea. She describes the sea as an evil monster; the community women "ran to the shore, calling out prayers at the sight of the black water, at the slowly, evilly retreating ice, the monster, ice, biding its time to trap their men" (14). Similarly, in "One Good Turn" the environment is again described in equally harsh terms. Russell's narrator

reports: "The wind was whippin' the snow about, an' it begun to drift. The wind rose wunnerful high, and the dogs begun to whimper, wantin' to turn back" (13). "Got so bad by'm bye, every bit o' snow cracked on their faces like a whip" (14).

Descriptions of the hardships caused by the brutal environment, as illustrated above, prevent one from looking nostalgically at the past through Russell's writing. She may certainly not be accused of "bypassing . . . the cruelties of outharbour life" like Arthur Scammell (O'Flaherty 154). Perhaps the fact that most of her writing was done for the newspaper dictated that she look forward instead of nostalgically backward. Or perhaps it was her position in society as a woman and her own experience of outport life which gave her a different perspective than her male literary peers.

## CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCTION TO RUSSELL'S WRITING

As previously noted, this thesis will focus on four of the longest running columns Dora Russell wrote during her time as Woman's Editor of the Evening Telegram: her profile column, editorial, fictional diary, and the "Spec-tatler." In an introduction to Russell's work it is important to examine each column and its defining features. The focus of Russell's work is women and issues surrounding women. These issues, however, are approached differently in each column.

During Russell's time as Woman's Editor she began a "Woman of the Week" column which ran from November 17, 1945 to August 28, 1948.<sup>1</sup> Between these dates approximately one hundred and forty individual women were profiled. The column in part records the thoughts of this early feminist writer who both acknowledged the value of women's contributions to the community and actively encouraged larger roles for women in social and political life. The column also provides valuable documentation of the activities of Newfoundland women both during and after the Second World War.<sup>2</sup> This column makes clear that Dora

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<sup>1</sup>The first five columns appear as "This Week's Interview."

<sup>2</sup>Of the one hundred and forty women profiled by Russell in this column, approximately 31% were involved in service

Russell felt women's activities were important enough to bring to the public's attention and through these profiles she reveals the lives and world of her female contemporaries.

The dramatic changes which World War II brought to the lives of women quickly come to the fore in Russell's profile column. For example, 15% of the 140 women profiled are newly returned service women and their stories clearly illustrate the expansion of horizons for women during the war. As nurses, clerks, and radio operators Newfoundland women travelled the world. Miss Claire Hiscock R.N. is a striking example. While doing her nursing training Miss Hiscock went to South Africa on an exchange study plan in 1936. During her stay war broke out and she enlisted in the Medical Division of the South African Army. In 1943 she was transferred to Cairo where she reports seeing the Great Pyramid of Giza and the Sphinx. "We were only a day's drive

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oriented careers such as health care and education; 16% worked in professions or had attained education uncommon for women of the day; 14% had participated in the war effort; 9% were involved with church organizations; another 9% were involved in other volunteer work; 8% were noted for their participation in cultural activities; and 5% were interviewed for their involvement with sport.



from Jerusalem, and we used to hitch hike from the post through the Holy Land" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Claire Hiscock" 22 June 1946). Hiscock's war experience also included postings in Italy and visits to Rome, Florence, Venice, Milan, and Naples. Finally, before returning home she cruised the Mediterranean.

While the military experiences of many of these women were not as pleasant and did not provide as much travel, it is clear from the accounts that geographic horizons did expand for women during the war. Another horizon which appeared to broaden for women during this period was occupational. While jobs in war industry were not available for women in Newfoundland, jobs in the military certainly did provide an option for young women. Miss Muriel Rogerson, for instance, spent the war years in Ireland doing Motor transport work (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Muriel Rogerson" 2 Feb. 1946) and Miss Margaret Kennedy enlisted in the Women's Division of the Royal Canadian Air Force as an Operational Clerk intercepting enemy air craft. Also in the RCAF (WD), Miss Eva Hoskins enlisted and was trained as a parachute packer and Miss Dorothy Pitcher was a stenographer.

The war then, provided not only an expansion of geographic horizons for women but also an expansion of the kinds of work to which women had access. Women were trained

in and worked in fields they were gaining access to for the first time. While progress and change are evident in one sense, women's participation in the war effort did little to advance equal rights in Canada.

Training provided for women under the War Emergency Training Program was designed to fit them for a specific job for the duration of the war, not for lifetime careers as skilled workers, much less skilled mechanics who might compete with men in the post-war job market. This is obvious in the generally shorter training period for women. (Pierson, They're Still Women 73)

Alison Prentice, in her study of Canadian women's history, reports that despite these changes traditional attitudes toward women remained in place:

It was understood that only the war emergency and the necessity to release able-bodied men for active duty justified the creation of the women's services. From the beginning, military authorities intended to use female recruits to replace support personnel such as clerks, cooks, telephone operators, drivers, mess waiters, and canteen helpers. (Prentice 302)

Ruth Roach Pierson agrees that the Air Force, Army and Navy intended to use female labour only to release men for combat

duty: "The mottoes of the women's services tell the story: *We Serve That Men May Fly; We Serve That Men May Fight; We Are the Women Behind the Men Behind the Guns*" (Pierson, Canadian Women 5). This aspect of women's war experience is also clearly reflected in the accounts of Russell's women of the week. While the war provided training and jobs unavailable to women in the past, almost all were support positions.

To stress the service and support roles performed by women during the war, however, risks reducing the importance of the work performed by these women, the hardships they endured, and the danger they encountered. The accounts of Russell's women of the week impress upon the reader the horrific conditions under which they lived and worked. Many of the women profiled found themselves directly in the line of fire. Miss Muriel Rogerson, for instance, was in two blitzes. She tells Russell: "It would be wrong to say we weren't scared. Of course we were . . . . Our minds were on our work, and that helped, but it was constant anxiety, wondering what had happened" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Muriel Rogerson" 2 Feb. 1946). Similarly, Miss Muriel Rabbitts R.N. found herself in charge of medical care at the East End Maternity Hospital located in one of the most heavily bombed areas of London. She remembers a home for pregnant women being bombed, the hospital being bombed and

having to evacuate the patients, as well as having to cook for them over one small grate. She reports: "It was like living out in the wilds somewhere." "It makes one wonder . . . what use civilization has been, when one sees mothers having to seek shelter in air-raid shelters with tiny babies and whimpering children" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Muriel Rabbitts" 30 Mar. 1946).

The harsh impact of this war on women was equally evident in civilian accounts. Russell interviews Cillia Epstein, survivor of a German concentration camp and Mrs. Dorothy Dickenson, who drove an ambulance in London during the air raids. Epstein reports the difficult conditions of the concentration camp and being able to keep her child alive only by feeding it her own 2 oz daily ration of bread (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Cillia Epstein" 31 Jan. 1948). Dickenson tells Russell of life in London where she left her son dressed at night in preparation for regular trips to air raid shelters. "It was hard on the nerves because no sooner would you return to the house from the shelter when another warning would sound, and out you would have to dash again. Then you would have to get up next morning, and work on as usual" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Dorothy Dickenson" 8 Feb. 1947).

Russell's reader is instilled with a sense of the many different aspects of women's experience in war.

Unfortunately, however, just as these columns document the broadening of geographic and occupational horizons, the contraction of these horizons is similarly evident in the years following the war. Some women returned home with plans to marry while others appeared to have had no firm plans for the future when interviewed by Russell. For those who hoped to remain in the work force, however, the difficulties of continuing a career are evident. Miss Elizabeth Prescott, a twenty-four year old interviewed by Russell in 1947, reports that she was one of twenty female wireless operators on board ships during the war. When interviewed by Russell, she was only one of six remaining (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Elizabeth Prescott" 15 Mar. 1947).

Of Canadian women's experience in the post-war era Prentice reports:

When the government disbanded the women's military services in 1946, post-war training programs for discharged members paid lipservice to the principle of equal opportunity for training for women and men, but in reality focussed [sic] on "suitable" occupations such as stenography, homemaking, dressmaking, and nursing. (306)

This again is reflected in the lives of Russell's women of the week. Ex-RCAF parachute packer, Eva Hoskins, for

instance, was a beauty consultant for Charles R. Bell Ltd. when interviewed by Russell in 1947 (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Eva Hoskins" 11 Oct. 1947). Similarly, after spending three years with the RCAF, Pearl Naomi King was provided with a beautician course in Montreal before returning home to Newfoundland. Her interests and abilities, as described by Russell, however, extended to writing, photography and psychology. King reports that she "used to go to Dalhousie University two nights a week . . . to listen to the lectures on psychology. I studied like I don't know what for a while, as I had some ambition of going in for social welfare" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Pearl Naomi King" 21 Dec. 1946). Despite King's interests, however, she was not encouraged to pursue a university education.

Just as society had encouraged women to participate in the public sphere during the war, in the post-war era women were encouraged to return to the domestic. According to Caroline Lang, who writes of women's war experience in Great Britain:

Propaganda that had so successfully manipulated women into wartime jobs now changed direction to persuade them to stay at home . . . . Magazines, whether aimed at the housewife or working girl, concentrated on clothes and cosmetics, the "ideal" home, and the contented,

well-fed family and happy husband. (C. Lang 43)

In The Feminine Mystique Betty Friedan also notes the difference in media portraits of women before and after the war. She writes that in 1939 the heroines of leading women's magazines "were career women--happily, proudly, adventurously, attractively career women--who loved and were loved by men" (38). Ten years later this image of "The New Woman" suddenly began to blur. According to Friedan, media images helped create a feminine mystique which "makes the housewife-mothers, who never had a chance to be anything else, the model for all women; it presupposes that history has reached a final and glorious end in the here and now, as far as women are concerned" (43).

In Canada the end of the labour shortage, the preference for hiring ex-servicemen after the war, the postwar baby boom, the end of state-supported child care, the introduction of family allowances and "a huge surge of advertising push[ing] the consumption of domestic commodities and romanticizing the domestic woman" all directed women back to domestic roles (Pierson Canadian Women 26). The stress on cosmetics and feminine beauty which was part of this post-war media campaign is evident in Russell's column. Not only does the "Woman of the Week" demonstrate the education of some ex-service women in cosmetics, but it also documents the presence of travelling

sales agents, such as Miss Jean H. Vezeau, for skin and hair care products (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Jean Vezeau" 7 June 1947). Such products are described with scientific terminology which appears to impress even Russell. In the words of Eva Hoskins "any girl can be attractive if she knows the correct use of cosmetics" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Eva Hoskins" 11 Oct. 1947).

Beyond recording the experiences and cultural forces affecting women in the war and post-war eras in Newfoundland, the "Woman of the Week" begins to reveal many of Russell's feminist values; these become more evident in "The Woman's Angle." Russell's feminism ranged from an honest appreciation and respect for the activities of the women in her community to a desire to see women go beyond these traditional roles. The idea of a "Woman of the Week" column in itself shows that Russell felt women's activities were important enough to be brought to the public's attention. Approximately 20% of the 140 women Russell interviewed were involved in volunteer work, either through their churches or other organizations like the YWCA, Women's Patriotic Association, or Girl Guides.

While the contribution of women to the war effort at the front may have been obvious to those who read Russell's column, Russell also brought to light the work of women who volunteered their time and energy at home. Mrs. H. R.



Brookes belonged to a group of women who formed the nucleus of the Women's Patriotic Association. The objectives of the WPA were to look after the comforts of the men in service, to work for the British Red Cross, and to help local needs (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Mrs. W. F. Hutchinson" 2 Mar. 1946). Volunteers gave their time to activities such as canteen service, visiting injured servicemen in hospital, and distributing secondhand clothing. Mrs. Brookes reports: "For many, possibly for most of us, it was not always easy. We had the usual problems to contend with--sickness, bad weather and maidless periods" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Mrs. H. R. Brookes" 12 Oct. 1946). Similarly, Mrs. Dorothy Frost who supervised catering at the YMCA during the war reports sometimes working eighteen hour days (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Dorothy Frost" 7 Sept. 1946).

Like her feminist foremother Armine Gosling, Russell senses that the work done by Newfoundland women was not recognized or appreciated by the general public. Her choice of quotations often brings this to the reader's attention. She quotes Mrs. Dorothy Frost: "Newfoundland knows little of the hard work and sacrifices of its women during those difficult days" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Dorothy Frost" 7 Sept. 1946). Often Russell's choice of quotations from these women, as well as her own comments, seeks specifically to praise and draw attention to women's undervalued or

unnoticed achievements. For instance, she quotes Major Rhoda Sainsbury of the Salvation Army:

I wish I could give some idea of what the women of St. John's have done. They have done so much that the public has never come to hear about. The poor and needy have been helped time and time again, and the good women of this city have done has never been realized [sic]. (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Major Rhoda Sainsbury" 9 Feb. 1946)

In "The Woman's Angle" Russell says that "it is because of her propensity to hide her light under a bushel that the world has been slow to accept a woman as raving [sic] equal rights and responsibilities with men" (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: The Club Women" 28 May 1947). It seems to be her goal in "Woman of the Week" to bring women's talents and achievements to the fore by directing attention and praise to those women who would down-play their own achievements. While many of the women interviewed performed admirable volunteer work, many tried to re-direct praise to others, such as support staff and co-workers. Mrs. Dorothy Frost, for instance, owner and manager of two restaurants, "attributes all the success she has had since she opened the 'Snack Bar' to her staff, and when we approached her to be Woman of the Week, she suggested that we write up the staff instead" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Dorothy Frost" 10

July 1948).

Russell, by contrast, attempts to counterbalance this tendency by making visible the achievements women were socialized to keep invisible. When interviewing the well-known and accomplished photographer Elsie Holloway, for instance, she reports:

Thirty years ago, however, it must have been unusual for a woman to carry on any kind of business on her own. Miss Holloway has little to say on the subject, being very unobtrusive where her work is concerned, but our guess is that there were many difficulties facing her in the beginning. (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Elsie Holloway" 19 Jan. 1946)

One gets the sense that the "Woman of the Week" column may have been the only forum in which the achievements of these women were reported.

Russell quite obviously appreciated and praised women's contributions in traditional domestic and support roles. As previously noted approximately twenty percent of the women she profiled were involved in community volunteer work. Further, some thirty percent of the women Russell interviewed continued the "service" role expected of women through traditional occupations which extended women's nurturing role such as health care and education.

However, while Russell praised women's contributions in these areas, she also challenged traditional boundaries for acceptable female careers and activities. As a group, the women Russell chose to profile had an impressive amount of education, ranging from technical and trade related courses to doctorates. She consciously details the training and work experience of each woman interviewed. It would seem that many of the "Women of the Week" were exceptional in their education and achievements.

Russell appears to have actively sought pioneering women who were breaking into roles or positions which had traditionally been reserved for men. Approximately twenty percent of the women interviewed were in pioneering roles for women such as management positions, or had education beyond the norm for women of the day. Russell interviews, for instance, Miss Louise Saunders, Newfoundland's first woman lawyer, Miss Ramsey Murray, Newfoundland's first occupational therapist, as well as Miss Mary Murphy, the first woman to be head of the Display Department of Bowring Brothers Ltd. On this latter appointment Russell comments:

It is encouraging to see this recognition of local talent and to see a woman entering, with such notable success, a field hitherto reserved to men. Miss Murphy is blazing a trail which we hope will be followed by other girls with imagination and

ability. (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Mary Murphy" 12 Dec. 1947)

While we may study the feminist values which emerge in "Woman of the Week," this column also provides an excellent opportunity to study aspects of voice important to writers writing in a colonial society. During the pre-Confederation era in which Russell wrote, St. John's was especially divided by a strict, hierarchical class structure. Russell's own position in this class structure and attitude toward it necessarily impact on her writing voice.

In the words of Elizabeth Miller, "Dora was the daughter of a merchant (small grocery business) and always had respect for social status" (Miller, Letter 26 March 1994). Russell's respect for social class may partially explain the unusually high level of education held by many of her subjects, as well as the high percentage who were involved in volunteer work. Who but the wealthy could afford technical training, university education, or to devote so much time to activities outside the home? Mrs. H. R. Brookes reports, for instance, that among the difficulties she and other WPA members faced in volunteering their services were "maidless periods" during the war when domestic servants were difficult to find (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Mrs. H.R. Brookes" 12 Oct. 1946). Another of Russell's subjects, Dr. Mildred Patterson, a missionary in

India, also reports problems with domestic help. The rules of the caste system prevented one individual from doing the entire range of household activities Patterson expected: "The sweeper class is forbidden to touch any other type of work" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Mildred Patterson" 18 May 1946).

Among Russell's subjects are also notable members of St. John's society such as Mrs. Andrew Carnell, wife of the city's mayor (Russell, "This Week's Interview: Mrs. Andrew Carnell" 23 Aug. 1947) and Miss Glenys MacDonald, "daughter of His Excellency the Governor and Lady MacDonald" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Glenys MacDonald" 27 Sept. 1947). Russell also profiles noted visitors such as Lady Ross "member of the British peerage, and widow of Sir Charles Ross, world-famous inventor of the Ross rifle." During this interview Lady Ross describes "the difficulties of working an estate during the war years . . . . Gamekeepers were absorbed into the services, and the wealth of such sports as deer stalking and salmon fishing was neglected by sports lovers" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Lady Ross" 14 Dec. 1946).

Despite Russell's obvious respect for social status, Elizabeth Miller reports that "In spite of this, politically she was a socialist (a strong supporter of the CCF)" (Miller, Letter 26 March 1994). This too, is reflected in

the profiles. On the sixth of March, 1948, Russell profiles Miss Jessie Earle, first president of the newly formed Ladies' Cold Storage Workers' Union. She begins the article: "It is perhaps surprising that, in this age, when unions are looked upon by employers and employees alike as a means to better understanding, women have not displayed a greater appreciation for the strength that lies in union."

While much may be discovered in "Woman of the Week" concerning the lives and circumstances of women in Russell's era, as well as her own values toward social status and her feminist ideas, other columns are similarly revealing. In Russell's editorial, "The Woman's Angle," which ran between November of 1945 and June, 1949, we see more clearly the feminist voice which was emerging in "Woman of the Week." While a reader of "Woman of the Week" may detect feminist values explicit and implicit, Russell's editorials take on issues surrounding women and important to women in a much more direct manner. Her agenda in this editorial appears varied. She commented on a wide range of political, social, and economic issues, sometimes from a distinct woman-centred perspective, sometimes not. Some topics frequently recur such as the National Convention, the problem of slum housing in St. John's, and women's role in public life.

If "Woman of the Week" revealed a desire to create a more active and varied role for women in Newfoundland's

public life, "The Woman's Angle" addressed the issue in a head-on manner. As a homemaker herself, Russell seems to have insight into factors, like women's lack of time and experience, which contributed to their low levels of participation in the public arena. In an editorial entitled "Do Women Think?" Russell addresses the situation of women trying to enter public life:

But somewhere, somehow, as they go through life, women lose their power of thought, and by the time they reach middle age, they find they cannot compete with men in intelligence. Actually, it is not intelligence, but experience, since man has spent centuries in using his head over such matters as social, economic and political problems, taxation, strikes, war problems, and peace problems.

Russell attempts to correct this situation by informing her readers about just such issues and also by providing a feed-back column called "In the Mailbox." Here she provides a public forum to break the silence of women who would not otherwise have an opportunity or the courage to write. Adrienne Rich writes that "language is power." She paraphrases Simone Weil in saying that "those who suffer from injustice most are the least able to articulate their suffering; and . . . the silent majority, if released into



language, would not be content with a perpetuation of the conditions which have betrayed them" (Rich 67).

Russell's goal seems to be precisely that of releasing women into language. In an editorial called "In the Mailbox" she complains: "The column we have set aside for you is certainly not being put to excessive use" and encourages reader response: " . . . the advice is so good that we wish to pass it on in the hope that it may encourage an expression of opinion on the part of our readers" (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: In the Mailbox" 3 Apr. 1946). She also encourages women to speak out by praising their abilities in an attempt to boost confidence. In "In the Mailbox" she agrees with a correspondent who wrote "The women are just as brainy as the men, only they never seem to have learned to express their thoughts" (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: In the Mailbox" 3 Apr. 1946).

Russell's goal of encouraging women to participate in public life seems to have been pursued in several ways. First her column reports the activities and advancements of other women at home and abroad. In "The Picture Has Changed" Russell reports to her readers:

From the Labour Department of the United States comes the revelation that women now comprise 5 per cent. of doctors in that country, 90 per cent of all medical laboratory technicians,

40 per cent of persons engaged in consumer goods manufacture, 13 per cent. of all production workers in heavy industry and 75 per cent. of all teachers.

Wow!

Similarly in "Women in Radio" Russell tells the reader at home that "During the war, women, particularly British women, made great strides in the field of broadcasting." On the home front, Russell informs readers that while they may not participate directly in Methodist College Literary Institute (M.C.L.I.) debates because that institution does not recognize women as "persons," a recent incident in which the Chairman "suggested that the ladies present might like to have something to say" set precedent that women may express their opinions as visitors (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Visitors are Welcome" 17 Feb. 1948).

Russell's second method of encouraging women's participation in public life is through particular columns which aim to change the way men, and possibly some women, view women and women's roles. In "Careers for Women" Russell sets out to show "Dad" why he should provide his daughters with career training. Among these reasons Russell includes the chance to increase family income, to support the family if her husband should be temporarily unemployed or if she should lose her husband. "It is the security that

a career gives a woman, in the knowledge that she has something to fall back on if need arises" (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Careers for Women" 7 Apr. 1948).

Russell's final attempt to encourage women to enter the public sphere comes through columns which overtly express the need for women in politics, both at the municipal and national level. In "City Mothers A Necessity," Russell shows that women must participate in politics if they want their concerns addressed. She objects, for instance, to the temporary use of the north end of Bannerman Park for organized games for older children at the expense of smaller children, for whom the facility was intended.

Our City Fathers, no doubt, have the welfare of the city at heart, but that august body would benefit in no small measure from the addition to its ranks of City Mothers. The recent decision of the Municipal Council to use Bannerman Park for organized games provides an example of a measure that might not have been adopted had women been represented on the Council.

Similarly, in "Our Place is There" she laments: "Newfoundland women, however, have never taken the place they might in political life. The fear of mental inferiority hangs over them, resulting in an extreme reluctance to take part in debatable discussions." In this

column she addresses a recurring theme in "The Woman's Angle": the absence of women at the National Convention:

It is a regrettable fact that not one woman has taken a seat among the forty-five members of the Convention, to help in guiding the destinies of her country at such an important phase in its history, along the sanest and wisest path.

(Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Our Place is There" 13 Sept. 1946)

This is a sentiment Russell expresses many times and in various and creative ways. More than thirty percent of her editorials address political topics, the vast majority of these deal with National Convention news and issues. Russell continually expresses her discontent with the childish and long winded nature of debates, as well as her disapproval of delegates who are strongly in favour of one form of government or another when the Convention's mandate is only to choose those forms of government which should be put on the ballot paper. In "A Dream of Fair Women" Russell writes of a dream she had while attending a Convention session:

The countenances of forty-five very perplexed masculine faces faded away to a picture of forty-five women guiding the destinies of their country in the same impartial and earnest spirit in which

they guide the destinies of their young.

.....

Ladies, take heart! Shed your inferiority complexes, and know, as of now, that any forty-five women in this country would not, could not, make such a fiasco of a debate as has been made of the Confederation delegation issue.

In another editorial called "A Convention of Women," Russell lays out in detail five reasons why she believes women would be preferable to men at the National Convention. First of all, most women don't smoke, and those who do would be able to wait until sessions were over. Secondly, women could knit while debating which would put an end to "delegates looking most pathetic in their idleness." Women wouldn't talk half as much or be as repetitive as the male delegates. If women were running the Convention there would be fewer delays and lastly, women would be no less knowledgeable than the present delegates.

That no women were elected as delegates to the National Convention did not deter Russell from encouraging women to participate in politics. Since there were no actual women candidates to follow through the process, Russell made up her own, Mrs. Bloggs, who, as Russell writes in a note at the bottom of her November 2, 1946 column, "sits on the National Convention only in the author's imagination"

(Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs' Stand on the Resolution" 2 Nov. 1946). Through Mrs. Bloggs, Portia, their acquaintances, and the fictional narrative Russell writes around them, the "Spec-tatler" pursues many of the issues raised in "The Woman's Angle." The majority of her "Spec-tatler" columns focus on political issues, particularly those at the Convention. Russell uses the "Spec-tatler" to pursue many of the same issues that arise in "The Woman's Angle" concerning women. Through Mrs. 'Bloggs's' fictional presence at the Convention she attempts to encourage women to enter politics, show why women in politics are necessary, as well as scold the male delegates for what she felt was inappropriate behaviour.

Before Mrs. Bloggs is "elected" to be a delegate at the Convention, Russell uses her to explore some of the reasons why the presence of women in politics is important. Russell, through the voice of a fictional character, first acknowledges the difficulties of women who do step forward into the political arena: "women to date have never come forward, and there are bound to be many difficulties in the path of any women who have the nerve to make the venture" (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs gets an Idea" 16 Mar. 1946). Mrs. Bloggs explains that "experience does count for something, you know, and the men have had countless generations of it behind them" (Russell, "Spec-tatler: We

Boost our Sex" 27 Apr. 1946).

Despite these problems, however, Russell concludes in each column that women's participation is not only desirable, but "necessary." Mrs. Bloggs asserts: "I certainly think a sprinkling of women in any council or government is necessary--makes it more representative, you know" (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs gets an Idea" 16 Mar. 1946). In "We Boost Our Sex" Mrs. Bloggs asserts that women are "letting the world down" by not participating in politics since women have the ability to "use their hearts as well as their heads."

Women have greater perception than men, like I said when we were talking about acting. They're all mothers at heart and they want what's best for their children and their neighbour's children. They think in broader terms than nationalism. (Russell, "Spec-tatler: We Boost Our Sex" 27 Apr. 1946)

Interestingly, the argument promoted in "We Boost Our Sex" is based on the less radical ideologies of maternal feminism which Russell uses in some of her editorials as well. Not only were women's roles as mothers a non-controversial way to argue for a role in public life, but it seems that Russell was sincere in her belief that because of women's role in the family they had something different and valuable to bring to public life.

Russell continues more of the ideas introduced in her editorials through the "Spec-tatler." Just as Russell instructs, scolds, and blasts Convention delegates in "The Woman's Angle," "Spec-tatler" continues the theme. Russell attacks the issue directly through her characters' criticism of the delegates' behaviour. One of Russell's concerns was that delegates campaigned on the platform that they would support one form of government or another, when, in fact, the aim of the Convention was merely to decide which forms of government were appropriate for the referendum ballot paper. Regarding this point Mrs. Bloggs asserts:

I want a man who'll go in there and tell what's what. I don't want him to decide the form of government for me. I want to make up my own mind. I don't want anyone to say, "If you put me in I shall see to it personally that this country gets Responsible Government." Phooey! (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs Reviews the Elections" 29 June 1946)

Much of Russell's criticism, however, is implicit. She characterizes Mrs. Bloggs as the ideal candidate, implying that those who behave differently are not performing as they should. In a second reminder that Mrs. Bloggs is only a fictional character Russell writes:

We wish to have it clearly understod [sic] that Mrs. Bloggs is a purely fictional character, and does not



actually sit on the National of Convention [sic]. Se [sic] is rather a symbol of the representation of women that we would like to have seen on the Convention.

(Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs at the Convention" 14 Sept. 1946)

Such representation means an individual who was at the Convention to process facts, rather than promote a particular form of government, as well as one who used "common sense" and did not waste Convention time with lengthy speeches and disorderly behaviour. Mrs. Bloggs tells Portia that she sees herself "as nothing more than a channel through which information will travel" (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs Makes Ready" 7 Sept. 1946). She further promotes Russell's idea of ideal Convention behaviour:

I have some sort of idea that we delegates should work together, instead of preparing argumentive [sic] speeches. I think no one should have a word to say unless he has beforehand examined the facts and made sure that he isn't arguing in favour of something that is unworkable. (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs Makes Ready" 7 Sept. 1946)

Through this description of how the Convention should be conducted, Russell may be proving her own point that women do indeed have a valuable perspective to bring to

politics. Instead of the competitive and confrontational system the male delegates create, Russell desires a situation in which delegates co-operate, and work with, instead of against each other. This cooperative, collective approach is more often associated with the cultures of muted groups than with the dominant.

Such a collective approach is explored by Russell in the columns which lead to the election of a fictional woman delegate to the National Convention. The idea of nominating female candidates originates with Mrs. Bloggs. Her idea comes to fruition through the Women's Club to which she and Portia belong. Mrs. Bloggs says to Portia, "We have only a small organization here but if we were to raise the question, we might contact other groups and have a mass meeting" (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs Gets an Idea" 16 Mar. 1946). The meeting ends with Portia before the group beginning to present the idea. At the next meeting "The Hall was packed" and "the various women's organizations were meeting to nominate a candidate for the Convention" (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs Confesses her Sin" 13 Apr. 1946). Not only are the women organized enough to nominate Mrs. Average Citizen, but they also work together to make sure that she will be able to commit herself to the task by arranging care for her children: "we all assured her that any time Aunt Min couldn't run in for the day we would

any of us be glad to lend a hand, and to make sure that the offer was dependable, we elected a Stand-in Committee for her right on the spot" (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs Confesses her Sin" 13 Apr. 1946). It is interesting that this episode not only emphasizes that women should be in politics, and the kind of perspective women would bring to politics, but it also subtly instructs women how to gain access to the political world.

While politics dominate "The Woman's Angle" and the "Spec-tatler" these were not the only forums in which Russell wrote of local politics. The National Convention dominated Newfoundland politics in the late 1940s and Dora Russell was the reporter who wrote the "Convention Proceedings" for the Evening Telegram between 1946 and 1948. These mainstream political reports are different in tone and content from the woman-centred editorials. Their style is much more formal and the content is limited to the Convention's daily proceedings and is relatively free of Russell's personal thoughts and opinions. The "Woman's Angle," for instance, is full of wit, sarcasm, and straight criticism: "surely they [women] couldn't be more personal than delegates who, not content with criticizing one another's arguments, have also begun to criticize the sound of one another's voices, and the shape of one another's noses" (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: A Convention of Women"

13 Feb. 1947). "Convention Proceedings," on the other hand, is much more restrained in content and style:

Dealing with property, Mr. Vardy thought that in order to get an Old Age Pension under the Means Test an applicant's property must not exceed \$2,000 in value, and a pensioner could not get full assistance unless he was getting no income at all. (Russell, "Terms Debate Continues" 25 Nov. 1947)

Russell appeared to move in and out of what were acceptable literary styles for masculine and feminine audiences. Generally her columns written for a predominantly female audience were much more conversational and used rhetorical devices such as sarcasm and rhetorical questions to entertain as well as inform her reader. These devices allow her work to move from the supposedly objective perspective taken in political reporting to a personal, subjective stance. Her fictional diary "Day by Day" is the least formal of her writings. Here her writing style has a conversational tone.

"Day by Day" is the last of Russell's columns to be discussed. This column was collected by Russell and published in 1983 under the title Day by Day: Pages from the Diary of a Newfoundland Woman. Written in diary entry form this collection, which appears to be largely

autobiographical, chronicles the life of homemaker Mary Smith. Mary is the wife of John, an accountant with the Department of Finance and the mother of three children. The diary entries chronicle the many charming, humorous, and embarrassing escapades of the children as well as the pleasures, duties, and frustrations of the woman at home. In the words of reviewer Roberta Buchanan:

Dora Russell's diary is a mixture of the satirical and the sentimental. The ordinary incidents of family life, the tedious yearly tasks of the householder, such as putting up the storm windows, are leavened by her sharp political commentary.  
(Buchanan 45)

Russell's Day by Day seems, at least on the surface, to be somewhat conventional compared to the ideas which surface forcefully in her other columns. Day by Day is loosely based on Russell's own life before she began working for the Evening Telegram; her children ranged in age from three to nine when she returned to the paid workforce. It is for this reason, perhaps, that the journals focus almost exclusively on the domestic and ignore the role women can play in public life. While she may not have included her views on women in the workforce in this column, Day by Day does reinforce some of the same values Russell upheld in other columns. The June 22nd entry, for instance, discusses

women going to vote. She concludes that the election results were pleasing to most, but:

For my part, I was sorry our lady candidate did not succeed. Women seem to have a hard time to make the grade politically, but we have to keep trying, that's all, and eventually we shall persuade an electorate that we have something to contribute to the national welfare . . . . We can't expect to have it come easily. The main thing right now is to vote sanely and sensibly and conscientiously, whenever elections come around.

(22 June 1946)

Although this diary is based on the life of a woman who does not participate in public life, it still perpetuates many of the feminist ideas present in Russell's other columns. Several of her editorials, for instance, hint at the idea that marriage isn't the blissful, most desirable role for a woman to perform: "The age-old fallacy that women will marry anybody rather than remain unwed throughout her [sic] life is gradually and very thoroughly being dissipated" (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Anti-Women Society" 17 Oct. 1947). Day By Day continues this message in its own way.

Mary never expresses overt discontent with her role as wife and mother. The sub-text of the collection, however,

leaves the reader with a disturbing sense of dissatisfaction. On the first page the reader pictures Mary shrugging her shoulders and chuckling as she says:

And that's our family. Except me. Me, I'm just an ordinary harassed housewife with three children underfoot, a budget that has to be stretched to meeting rising costs, and more work to do than I can find time for.

Just like any other mother. (1 Jan. 1946)

The diary entries in this collection, however, continue to build a sense of discontent until one begins to feel that Mary Smith is quite serious about being harassed and overworked. While the diary never goes as far as to suggest alternatives to this child-rearing domestic role for women, it does seem to focus on debunking the myth of the happy homemaker and warning women to think seriously before committing themselves.

One of the most striking features of this column is the unfavourable light cast upon the husband figure. The short columns build a portrait of an inconsiderate individual who is at times as frustrating as the children. When John, for instance, tells Mary about his New Year's resolution to get up and go to work early, she "groaned, because that meant I had to jump too. I wished his New Year resolutions would include getting himself off to work, complete with

breakfast, rubber footwear and handkerchief" (Russell, Day By Day 2 Jan. 1946). John is shown to be similarly inconsiderate of her feelings and unaware of the impact his behaviour has on Mary when he asks what is wrong with staying home for a quiet evening during the Christmas season. Mary doesn't bother to argue. She tells the reader: "John is out of the house every day. He doesn't understand what it is to be stuck in the same old place, all day and all night too" (Russell, Day By Day 8 Jan. 1946)

By showing a husband figure who lacks consideration and understanding for the homemaker's role, Russell perhaps hoped to re-educate some men or help women recognize that they are not alone in their frustrations. She appears to have been successful; one of Russell's readers writes in a letter to the editor, "In closing I want to say that I like your page very much and would as soon miss a meal as miss 'Day by Day.' Any woman who has children will appreciate that column" (Housewife, "In the Mail Box").

From this brief examination of Russell's newspaper columns, one can conclude that a significant portion of her writings center on women and issues important to women's lives and women's roles. In "Day by Day" Russell gives a fictional account of the daily activities, concerns, and frustrations of women like her readers. In "Woman of the Week" she explores the work and experiences of her



contemporaries, promoting them by bringing them to the public's attention. In the "Spec-tatler" Russell uses a fictional form to express her views on local politics. And finally, "The Woman's Angle" gave Russell an opportunity to explore the feminist and political values which surface, often implicitly, in her other works. Through these columns we may gain a well rounded view of voice and the forces which helped shape Russell's voice in Newfoundland during the post-war, pre-Confederation era.

### CHAPTER 3: DOUBLE VOICE

Dora Russell's writing can be examined within the context of feminist poststructuralism. As Chris Weedon points out "the term 'poststructuralist' is, like all language, plural" (19). Though the term does not have one fixed meaning, it is generally applied to a range of theoretical positions which developed in and from the work of Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Louis Althusser, and Michel Foucault (Weedon 19).

Unlike the liberal humanist tradition which views the subject as "an essence at the heart of the individual which is unique, fixed and coherent and which makes her what she is," the feminist poststructuralist position sees "a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak" (Weedon 32-33). Since this theoretical perspective assumes subjectivity to be a social construct, this chapter will examine some of the different values and ideologies struggling for dominance within the writer and the double-voiced discourse which results.

There have been many theories put forward which aim to explain and explore women's writing voices, why they are different from male voices, and precisely what causes this difference. Among these theories is Organic or biological criticism which believes texts are "indelibly marked by the

body" (Showalter, "Feminist Criticism" 17), and which "stresses the importance of the body as a source of imagery" (Showalter, "Feminist Criticism" 18). Linguistic and textual theories of women's writing ask whether sex differences in writing can be theorized in terms of biology, socialization, or culture. They also focus on the possibility of women creating new languages of their own (Showalter, "Feminist Criticism" 20). "Psychoanalytically oriented feminist criticism locates the difference of women's writing in the author's psyche and the relation of gender to the creative process. It incorporates the biological and linguistic models of gender difference in a theory of the female psyche or self, shaped by the body, by the development of language, and by sex-role socialization" (Showalter, "Feminist Criticism" 23-24).

This thesis, however, takes the same critical perspective as Elaine Showalter, who, in her 1982 essay "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," asserts:

A theory based on a model of women's culture can provide, I believe, a more complete and satisfying way to talk about the specificity and difference of women's writing than theories based on biology, linguistics, or psychoanalysis. (27)

In her view, the female psyche is perhaps best studied as "the product or construction of cultural forces" (27).

A culture based theory of women's writing and subjectivity must take into account the fact that women participate in both a male culture which is dominant in society and a less powerful female culture. According to Showalter, anthropologist Edwin Ardner suggests that "women constitute a *muted group*, the boundaries of whose culture and reality overlap, but are not wholly contained by, the *dominant (male) group*" (qtd. in Showalter, "Feminist Criticism" 29). The result of being positioned inside two traditions at once is a "double-voiced discourse" which "always embodies the social, literary, and cultural heritages of both the muted and the dominant" (Lanser qtd. in Showalter, "Feminist Criticism" 31). Thus, the second assumption of gynocriticism, as defined by Showalter, is that "women's writing is always 'bisexual,' in dialogue with both masculine and feminine literary traditions" ("Introduction: The Rise of Gender" 4).

This culture based theory of women's writing, as explained by Showalter, can be applied to the writing of Dora Russell. As a feminist writer in the early 1940s Russell's writing voice may be seen as a compilation of both male and female values and literary traditions. In fact, as Chris Weedon explains the feminist poststructuralist subject, Russell's voice may be seen as a site of tension and conflict where the ideologies of the dominant,

patriarchal society compete for dominance against the ideologies of an emerging feminism (Weedon 21).

Since Russell participated in both the dominant male culture and a muted women's culture, her writing voice contains values from each group, values which often conflict, and some which must be delicately expressed if she is to continue to operate in both worlds. Her participation in both cultures is illustrated in the range of topics and positions Russell takes in "The Woman's Angle." Though this column claims to report on local events and issues from the woman's perspective, the articles are actually a mixture of both male-centred and female-centred pieces, perhaps a predictable response from a writer participating simultaneously in both cultures.

"The Woman's Angle" is in many senses just what the title suggests, a woman-centred editorial. Topics approached by Russell and her attitudes toward them include those which may traditionally be expected of a woman, as well as those which would be of interest to women. Russell covers domestic topics, such as the latest household gadgets and stain treatment, as well as issues like prices and shopping in the post-war economy. Other columns stress the importance of pre-natal care for women, proper nutrition, and other domestic concerns. In "Cheaper Electricity," for instance, Russell writes of the importance of lower

electricity rates for housewives: "With so much lamentation over the increased cost of living, the housewife will be delighted to find an appreciable difference this month in her bill for electricity, due to the recent reduction in rates." "These modern times bring the housewife so many electrical devices for lightening her work, that cheap electricity is obviously necessary."

Russell's pieces demonstrate not only topics one would expect of a woman writing for other women, but also a philanthropic and people-centred focus which one might expect of a woman writer. A variety of issues reoccur in Russell's editorial; one such issue is the problem of slum housing, covered in editorials like "Houses for All," "Slum Solution," and "Building Boom." One is given a sense of urgency through the repetition, as well as through the sympathetic way Russell presents the victims of this post-war housing shortage. In "Houses for All" Russell suggests that empty barracks be used to "provide temporary shelter for these luckless people." In "Building Boom" she refers to "those unfortunate people who now are forced to live wherever they can, regardless of whether the house is old and leaky, cold, and falling apart."

While such columns clearly take a traditional perspective or cover topics aimed at female readers, "The Woman's Angle" does not always appear to be written for

women. "Life Cycle of a Pocket-Book," for instance, addresses "the average head of the family," "the average man" at thirty, at forty and again at sixty. Similarly, "Reward of Service" addresses the lack of work for returned servicemen without acknowledging the situation of their wives, families, or returning servicewomen, many of whom Russell interviewed in "Woman of the Week." Another series of three editorials on family allowances addresses the stated issue from the masculine perspective. "[T]he man with a family to support must have some means of equalization of income with the man who, earning the same wages, has no one but himself to care for. Family allowances are designed to do this . . . " (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Family Allowances Again" 20 Jan. 1948). "A man shouldn't be penalized for having children" (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Family Allowances" 14 Aug. 1946). Nowhere does Russell mention or acknowledge the struggling mothers of the country who also will benefit from family allowances, women like Mary Smith in Day by Day who has "a budget that has to be stretched to meeting rising costs" (Russell, Day by day 1 Jan. 1946).

Though Russell sets out to create a page and an editorial for women, her simultaneous participation in two cultures means that she is unable to ignore half of her own tradition. The mix which results is a double-voiced

discourse, one concerned with both masculine and feminine points of view.

Just as the male perspective is part of Russell's cultural framework, so are male attitudes and values. Mixed with editorials that portray the altruism and kindness expected of women, are editorials which show the assertive aggressive attitudes expected of men. Russell's own attitude toward women, for instance, is at times gentle and encouraging while at other times quite assertive. In an article titled "In the Mailbox" Russell encourages women to use the feed-back column provided to express their opinions:

It would be vastly encouraging to see some opinions voiced on the desirability, if not the probability of having women elected to the National Convention. Come on, ladies! If you are not convention-conscious, you must have an opinion on some other subject.

In a different column, however, Russell's tone becomes more forceful. She supports the ideas of a man who writes about women's rights. Paraphrasing him, she reports: "it's up to the females to get a good grip on their boot straps and pull hard." "Life is getting up and doing the job that has to be done, not lolling around waiting for 'pie in the sky'" (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Blueprint for Feminine Endeavour" 31 July 1946). In an editorial condemning soap



operas, Russell's tone toward her female readers maintains its forcefulness and also contains a sense of disapproval:

Women being the sentimentalist they are, it seems likely that the soap opera we will always have with us. Fortunately, for us tougher members of the gentle sex, there are other programmes, or there is the alternative of blessed quiet!

(Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Soap Operas" 27 June 1946)

Russell's impatience with her own sex seems to reveal a masculine perspective, as noted by one of her readers in a letter to the editor: "I think that in writing such a column as "The Woman's Angle" you should write from the woman's angle, and in regard to radio serials you don't give the woman's angle on it at all but only your own Angle"

(Housewife). It seems logical that being a woman assertive enough to participate in what was at that time in St. John's an all male arena, Russell would show values similar to those of the men around her. She must simultaneously view her fellow women with the values of both the dominant male and muted female cultures.

Russell's profile column, "Woman of the Week" also illustrates a combination of both masculine and feminine values. Her criteria for success, for instance, seem to be varied and include the attitudes one would expect of both

genders. In several cases, for example, Russell stresses very traditional and masculine measures of success, such as control over money, staff, and responsibility. Writing of Dorothy Maud Vey, "Manageress of W. and G. Rendell, insurance and commissior [sic]" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Dorothy Maud Vey" 29 June 1946), she lists her education, duties and says, "She is also responsible for a considerable amount of money which she handles each year, and it is safe to assume that she holds one of the most responsible positions in the commercial life of St. John's" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Dorothy Maud Vey" 29 June 1946). Similarly, she writes of Miss Nora Hogan, manager of the Capitol and Paramount theatres, quoting her as saying, "I supervise a staff of about eighteen at each theatre, and pay their salaries . . . . Then, I have to do the banking every day" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Nora Hogan" 9 Mar. 1946). In a society where men dominated the business world, these would surely be male-defined measures of success, and would have surely impressed both male and female readers.

At the same time, however, Russell is rooted equally strongly in the values of the muted female culture. While she does focus on exceptional women, like Louise Saunders, the first woman to be admitted to the Newfoundland Bar Association, she also profiles those who were exceptional in the domestic and volunteer spheres. One such example is

midwife Mrs. E. Hutchings who was born in Germany, had lived fifty years on Pennywell Road, and reportedly delivered over one thousand babies. As illustrated earlier, a significant portion of Russell's interviews were with women who did volunteer work with organizations like the Salvation Army and other churches, the YWCA, Girl Guides, and Red Cross, or whose professions were traditional for women, such as teaching and nursing which extended the community-minded, nurturing roles expected of women. Russell says that "Mrs. A. R. Scammell is a great believer in 'service'" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Mrs. A. R. Scammell" 23 Aug. 1947); many of her subjects held a similar community-minded and service-oriented outlook which Russell evidently admired.

A focus on service was certainly a feature of the female culture which Russell reported on in her columns. As an extension of these women's self-sacrifice and altruistic nature, Russell often used the "Woman of the Week" as an opportunity to profile the organizations or events these women represented as much as, and sometimes more than, the women themselves. For instance, a 1946 column on Miss Caroline Furlong, Chief Commissioner of Girl Guides in Newfoundland, profiles the organization as well as the woman. She writes about the four sides of guiding which are camping, local service, culture, and homemaking (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Caroline Furlong" 21 Sept. 1946).

When, in March of 1946, Russell profiles Mrs. W. F. Hutchinson, Honorary Secretary of the Women's Patriotic Association, it is interesting to note that according to W.P.A. records, the article was to focus on the group rather than Mrs. Hutchinson. W.P.A. Minutes of the Executive Committee on February 20th report, "Mrs. Hutchinson advised that Mrs. Russell--Reporter from the Evening Telegram--had visited Headquarters, Feb. 18th, and that an article on the W.P.A. would be published in the near future." Records from the March 12th meeting report that "an article had been written and published by Mrs. Russell, Women's Editor of the Evening Telegram upon present activities of the W.P.A." ("Women's Patriotic Association: Minutes of Executive Committee"). Ultimately, Russell's own views of appropriate roles for women encompass both public and domestic activities. Of Mrs. Joseph Courtney, business woman and mother, Russell writes:

The outstanding thing about Mrs. Courtney is not her success in business, however as many women are successful in business, but the fact that she has combined two careers, marriage and business and made a success of both. (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Mrs. Joseph Courtney" 22 Nov. 1947)

Courtney was known for "the success she and her husband achieved in the Beauty and Hairdressing business" (Russell,

"Woman of the Week: Mrs. Joseph Courtney" 22 Nov. 1947). They owned one of the first beauty parlours in St. John's which opened in 1923. In such a field Courtney would have been catering entirely to women clients.

While it seems that in many ways Russell was able to slip in and out of the values and traditions of both the dominant male culture and the female sub-culture, there are times when the balancing act does not appear an easy one. Inevitably for a writer with Russell's untraditional attitudes about women and their roles, there were times when the values which emerged from her feminine heritage clashed with the values she inherited from her masculine heritage.

Feminist poststructuralists agree that because of women's social location "women's writing may well be more ideologically fractured and more open to oppositional readings than texts by male authors of the same period . . . " (Weedon 168). According to Toril Moi, feminist theorists Gilbert and Gubar believe that a female voice "would have to take a rather roundabout route to express itself through or against the oppressive effects of the dominant patriarchal modes of reading" (Moi 59). Gilbert and Gubar examine female authored texts "whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning" (Gilbert and Gubar 73). While Gilbert and Gubar write of these ideas

in relation to women's fiction, the double-voiced discourse explained by Elaine Showalter also leads to a more ideologically fractured text and to "surface designs" which attempt to hide or obscure less socially acceptable messages in Russell's editorials.

For instance, at times a reader feels as though Russell is backtracking on her own opinions. In an editorial entitled "Should Married Women Work?" Russell explores many reasons why married women should work outside the home: the need to supplement the family income, women's desire to "Get out of the home" and make a contribution to the family standard of living are all reasons why married women should participate in the work force. She writes to husbands who would keep their wives at home: "It may be argued that keeping an idle wife when she is needed elsewhere is selfishness, quite aside from the personal selfishness of stifling and crippling her as a person" (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Should Married Women Work?" 16 May 1946).

But despite these reasons for married women working outside the home, at the end of this editorial Russell falls away from the position she has been building in the article. She ends by making what almost seems a concession to the status quo and those who uphold it: "but unfortunately, the raising of the standard of living by means of the wife getting out to work is too often accomplished at the expense

of somebody else's standards." So while Russell argues that women should participate in the paid workforce, she also presents a counter argument to her own position by acknowledging that ultimately a married woman's participation in the paid workforce can take a job from someone else, likely a man, and therefore lower another's standard of living. By introducing this point at the end of the editorial, what is otherwise a strong message supporting women working outside the home becomes obscured and ambiguous.

In another editorial similar techniques obscure what might otherwise be a strong, confident feminist message. In the "Anti-Women Society," Russell's process is reversed. Here she begins with a concession to the status quo, then builds against it. She proves Showalter's idea that "in some women's literature, feminine values penetrate and undermine the masculine systems that contain them" (Showalter, "Toward a Feminist Poetics" 1227). This editorial focuses on "the newly formed 'Anti-Women Society' in London" who aim to preserve men's rights. Russell begins her refutation of the Anti-Women Society's ideologies by essentially agreeing with them:

The Anti-Women Society has set its face against the incursion of women into masculine fields, with some justification, it must be said. While we do

not subscribe to the belief that woman's place is at home, we do think that she shines in her glory in the domestic setting, and that the average woman of marriageable age would prefer a home and children to care for than to hold a job by means of which some man could support a wife and family.

(Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Anti-Women Society"

17 Oct. 1947)

Immediately after this statement she begins with "However . . . " and works against her previously stated position. In this case the material seems so controversial that it forces Russell to choose her argument with great care; her counter-argument is a carefully chosen maternal feminist position rather than a more radical equal rights argument. She says that women, despite the fact that they may not prefer public life, have absolutely no choice in the matter since "men have created such chaos in this world that the economic balance is completely upset" and women cannot "be assured that their children would enjoy the advantages of economic security" (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Anti-Women Society" 17 Oct. 1947).

Mixed with this careful, maternal feminist argument, however, is a stronger message which Russell may have been trying to obscure with more moderate statements. After explaining women's important roles in production and



quickly comes to suspect that duality is at work here in the figure of Grannie Smith.

In Day by Day: Pages from the Diary of a Newfoundland Woman, Mary Smith is the writer/heroine. She is a homemaker with a husband, John, and three children, Linda Mae ten, Daffy eight, and Judy five. While Mary plays the average, supposedly happy Newfoundland housewife, the text shows windows of discontent and frustration. One gains the sense that John is not understanding or considerate; Mary writes in the diary "I didn't bother to argue the point. John is out of the house every day. He doesn't understand what it is to be stuck in the same old place, all day and all night too" (Russell, Day by Day 8 Jan. 1946). John does a variety of inconsiderate things to the heroine, including holding her responsible for his not having the proper tools at hand when he climbs the ladder to install the storm windows.

"Next time I get up there to put those windows on," he said grimly, "if I ever put them on, you'd better see to it that everything I need is at hand." Well, of all the nerve! If that isn't just like a man. (Russell, Day by Day 5 Nov. 1946)

The reader also gets a sense of the duties and responsibilities inherent in raising children. While many of the children's mishaps are amusing or touching, one

maintaining life on the home front during the Second World War, she writes: "We proved our worth, and it can hardly be to our discredit that we have liked the taste of independence, and in so many instances have desired its continuance." Ultimately, her concluding paragraph totally contradicts her opening statement that women would prefer to be in the home with children:

[W]omen are not so anxious to give up good jobs in order to take on the responsibilities and hardships of married life. The age-old fallacy that women will marry anybody rather than remain unwed throughout her [sic] life is gradually and very thoroughly being dissipated. (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Anti-Women Society" 17 Oct. 1947)

In The Mad Woman in the Attic Gilbert and Gubar explore the issue of duplicity of voice. According to their theory the nineteenth-century female author projects her feminine rage into a monstrous double while the heroine remains all that Victorian society expected her to be. "In projecting their anger and dis-ease into dreadful figures, creating dark doubles for themselves and their heroines, women writers are both identifying with and revising the self-definitions patriarchal culture has imposed on them" (Gilbert and Gubar 79). While Russell's fictional diary does not contain a classic monstrous double, a reader

senses an harassed homemaker in Mary Smith. On a wet morning when she decides to sleep late and let the children stay home from school she concludes: "'Serves you right for your laziness,' I scolded myself, 'now you'll have them underfoot all morning.' And I did" (Russell, Day by Day 24 Apr. 1946).

Despite our initial expectations, it is not the homemaker-heroine, toward whom Russell directs our envy although Mary is everything society admired and expected of women at this time. Rather, it is the unconventional Grandmother figure who is to be envied. Similar to the monster figures observed in nineteenth-century women's writing by Gilbert and Gubar, Grannie Smith defies convention and is portrayed as the opposite of the heroine. Mary outwardly disapproves of Grannie's behaviour and refusal to conform to social conventions:

I do wish she wouldn't act quite so young. It gives people the funniest impressions, and I really have to do a great deal of explaining on grandmother's account. (Russell, Day by Day 13 Mar. 1946)

Mary disapproves of her flying instead of travelling by a mode more suitable for her age: "You'd think a person of seventy-four would hardly want to be flitting around in the air. I can't understand her, 'pon my word, I can't"

(Russell, Day by Day 5 Feb. 1946).

Upon Grandmother Smith's arrival, Mary expresses her surprise to John: "She's so entirely beyond what I had expected" (Russell, Day by Day 11 Feb. 1946).

. . . it was just the surprise of it, to find a woman of her age gadding about, with a Damon Runyan always in her pocketbook, and a choice bit of schoolgirl slang always on her lips.

To say nothing of her fondness for startling clothes. You'd think too, that she would have some nice, old-fashioned recipe to drop out at a moment's notice. But no, it's something 'a la king' and something else 'au fromage', and when she finds I haven't got half the ingredients to make her favourite dishes, she will set about adding the craziest things to stews and casseroles until I wonder how John puts up with having his beloved plain fare tampered with. He wouldn't have half the patience with me, that I can guarantee. (Russell, Day by Day 11 Feb. 1946)

The reader, then, is continually told that Mary disapproves of Grandmother Smith's unconventionality, the fact that she doesn't want to sit in a rocker and knit socks, that she wears colours and fashions Mary feels are inappropriate for her age, leads an active social life, and prefers to play

"swing rhythm" on the piano instead of classical music.

As the last two sentences of the previous quotation indicate, there is a building contrast between Mary and Grandmother; Grannie gets away with things Mary could not, and she has more freedom than Mary. In preparing Mary to attend a wedding Grannie says, "Of course you must go . . . . Why, you don't get out half enough, Mary, and you know it'" (Russell, Day by Day 13 Mar. 1946). Ultimately, Mary picks out one of Grannie's outfits and is transformed into a seemingly younger, and more attractive Mary:

The upshot of it all was that I consented to try on Grannie's cute little number. That was my finish. I kept it on.

"Oh Mommy," breathed Linda when she saw me all dressed up. "You're just as pretty as Grannie, every bit."

"I'm flattered," I said. And meant it.

(Russell, Day by Day 13 Mar. 1946)

Eventually Grannie returns to New York insisting, "I can't settle down for good in a pokey little place like this, where nothing ever goes on" (Russell, Day by Day 12 July 1946). Grannie's lifestyle, however, looks quite different from Mary's perspective: "If I was able to take in everything you do," she responds, "I'd figure I was living a pretty gay life" (Russell, Day by Day 12 July 1946). One

wonders if Mary "doth protest too much" about Grannie's unconventional ways. Her constant disapproval may mask feelings of envy.

Mary and Grannie make a strange pair and Mary is certainly an odd hero. The sub-text of the collected diary entries show her to be perhaps an anti-hero. It would seem that it is not her lifestyle which the reader is supposed to strive toward. On the contrary, the ideal appears to be the mature, post-family stage of a woman's life which brings more free time and freedom from social convention.

Grannie Smith also defies social convention in her role as mother-in-law. Unlike the stereotypical image of the nasty, interfering mother-in-law, Grannie proves herself to be a role model for Mary. She also supports Mary, encouraging her to lead a more active, less confined lifestyle. For instance, not only does she encourage Mary to get out to more social functions by encouraging her to attend a wedding in the March 13th, 1946 column, but she also lends Mary the clothes she needs to attend and to look modern and attractive. By showing the mother-in-law as a supportive figure Russell develops an image of sisterhood, of women work together instead of against each other.

Evidence of the double-voiced discourse which results from participation in both the dominant male culture and muted female culture is perhaps as evident in literary form

as in the previously explored values which emerge from Russell's work. Showalter asserts:

A second assumption of gynocriticism is that women's writing is always 'bisexual,' in dialogue with both masculine and feminine literary traditions . . . . Women's literary and critical texts are both double-voiced discourses, inevitably and continually engaged with patrilineal and matrilineal sources.

("Introduction: The Rise of Gender" 4)

While much of Russell's writing is obviously informed by what Showalter refers to as "matrilineal sources," particular pieces also show strong evidence of her masculine literary heritage. Works like Russell's "Day By Day" fictional diary column fall within strong female traditions, while others like her fictional narrative column "Spec-tatler" clearly emerge from masculine traditions. The title "Spec-tatler" is formed by combining the titles of the eighteenth century periodicals The Spectator and The Tatler. There was also published at the time a periodical called The Female Spectator, but it is likely that Russell would not have read these in the public education system of her day.

Not only were both periodicals founded and written by men, but it is possible that Russell's inspiration for beginning a column which alludes to eighteenth century

literature may rest with Albert Perlin who preceded her at the Evening Telegram and who wrote at the Daily News during the 1940s. Since there appears to have been no Women's Editor at the Daily News during Russell's time at the Evening Telegram, Russell's closest literary counterpart was Perlin. She and Perlin read each others' work and made reference to the other in their own columns. In the fall of 1921 Albert Perlin began

what was to become an amazingly successful column in The Evening Telegram. It was called "Our Local Pepys" and was written in the style of the famous diarist Samuel Pepys. Pepys compiled a diary revealing life in England during the late 1600s. In "Pepys" the young columnist covered all phases of life in Newfoundland. (Hollohan 26)

Perlin's column chronicled daily activities and was written in an imitation of Pepys's style:

January 3rd.--A foul morning, wet and with much fog. To wait on Dr. V. P. Burke at his office and to discourse with him of the Rotary Club and other matters. To the Green Lantern, there to take luncheon with the Rotarians . . . . My wife mighty pressing for a new dress for the evening, which I am against the laying out of money on yet, which makes her angry. More news out of Ireland, and



all of the treaty which the British Government makes with Sinn Fein. (Perlin, "Our Local Pepys" 4 Jan. 1922)

Perlin's column imitates clearly Pepys's sentences:

A foul evening this was tonight, and mightily troubled to get a coach home; and, which is now my common practice, going over the ruins in the night, I rid with my sword drawn in the coach. (Pepys 13 Feb. 1667)

While the stylized and bland tone of Perlin's Pepys is very different from Russell's "Spec-tatler," it is possible that Russell was inspired to continue the literary tradition Perlin had established at The Evening Telegram. Perlin continues the male literary tradition in his ideologies as well as his form. For instance, in the above quotation he stresses male control of money. Russell, however, subverts the established forms to suit her own needs. While he chose the Pepys diary as a model, she chose The Tatler and The Spectator as her models. All three were common school texts in the British education system.

The Tatler was a periodical founded by Sir Richard Steele which appeared three times weekly between 1709 and 1711. The Spectator was produced by Steele and Joseph Addison between 1711 and 1712. Both periodicals rely on a cast of characters and "familiar conversation between fictional speakers or between the friendly writer and the

involved, though silent, reader" (Ross 24). The Tatler was supposedly written by the fictional Issac Bickerstaff. Readers were intended, however, to see through Bickerstaff to "a witty creator" (Ross 27). Similarly, Russell followed in this tradition, with the by-line of the "Spec-tatler" reading "by Portia," an obvious front for Russell herself. Russell plays with the dynamics of the situation, ironically at times referring to herself in her role as the Woman's Editor: "Like your Women's Editor said last week . . . ." (Russell, "Spec-tatler" 26 Apr. 1947). Mrs. Average Citizen says in "We Women Stick Together," "She [Portia] and the Women's Editor are like sisters. They're always together" (4 May 1946).

It is interesting that Russell chooses Portia as a pen name. Her early editorials are also credited to this famous character from The Merchant of Venice. Shakespeare's Portia was a woman who took control of language and spoke persuasively in public, among men. Russell, disguised as Portia performs the same role, commenting on subjects traditionally reserved for men, such as politics, in a public forum which was also traditionally reserved for men. Portia as the fictional character in the "Spec-tatler" is actively involved in public discourse. She initiates many of the discussions which appear in the column and is supposedly responsible for writing them and bringing them

into the public sphere. Portia's role, relationship with language and public discourse are illustrated in one of Russell's columns which ends with Portia getting up in front of her Women's Club. The final sentence reads: "I began to speak" (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs Gets an Idea" 16 Mar. 1946).

The cast of characters employed by The Spectator included Sir Roger de Coverley, a Tory squire, Sir Andrew Freeport, a Whig and "Next to Sir Andrew in the Club-room sits Captain Sentry, a Gentleman of great Courage, good Understanding, but invincible Modesty" (Steele, The Spectator: "The Club" 2 Mar. 1711). Russell, by comparison employs regularly Mr. and Mrs. Bloggs, Mr. and Mrs. Average Citizen, as well as a small cast of secondary characters like Uncle Bill Killick, Mr. Livyer, Percy Pulverize, Mayor La Trivia, and Fibber McGee, who was perhaps borrowed from the U. S. radio program "Fibber McGee and Molly." We can see that with her own characters she continues the eighteenth-century literary tradition of assigning type-cast names.

Subject matter in Bickerstaff's Tatler includes accounts of gallantry, pleasure, and entertainment which shall be under the Article of White's Chocolate-house; Poetry, under that of Will's Coffee-house; Learning under the Title of Graecian; Foreign and Domestick

News, you will have from St. James's Coffee-house; and what else I have to offer on any other Subject, shall be dated from my own Apartment. (Steele, The Tatler: "The Plan of The Tatler" 12 Apr. 1709)

Ross comments that "Both Steele and Addison are moralists who pay particular attention to domestic existence" (41). They also both celebrate London, discussing daily town life (43). A large number of the papers dealt with literary criticism (45). Also there were many oblique references to public events and political commentary through the characters of Sir Roger de Coverley and Sir Andrew Freeport (48).

Russell takes the agenda laid out by Steele and Addison and shapes it to her own interests. She alters the masculine tradition to fit that of the muted female culture. For instance, while the setting for many of Steele and Addison's columns is in the public world, Russell's columns have a strong domestic feel about them. Mr. Spectator reports, "I have passed my latter Years in this City, where I am frequently seen in most publick Places" (Addison, The Spectator: "Mr. Spectator Introduces Himself" 1 Mar. 1711). Similarly, the settings for The Tatler are various public places such as Coffee-houses and Chocolate-houses (Steele, The Tatler: "The plan of The Tatler" 12 Apr. 1709). In contrast to this, many of Russell's columns are set in the

home of Portia or Mrs. Bloggs. Often they are engaged in very domestic activities as they converse. Mrs. Bloggs is described with her "everlasting knitting" (Russell, "The Spec-tatler: The Gordian Knot" 21 Feb. 1948). Another conversation begins with "Mrs. Bloggs and I knitting furiously" (Russell, "The Spec-tatler: The Light that Failed" 11 Sept. 1947). In other scenes Mrs. Bloggs is ironing or peeling potatoes. When Portia suggests that Wayfarer has gotten the better of Mrs. Bloggs in an argument, Bloggs gives the explanation, "I'm never really at my best unless I have my knitting, or a teacup in my hand" (Russell, "The Spec-tatler" 15 March 1947).

Russell also alters the tradition by making politics the major focus of her column, when in The Tatler and The Spectator it enters mostly indirectly. Not only is Russell's focus political, but many of her columns also deal with women and their role in politics. Ross says that both Steele and Addison "are rather patronizing to women" (41). In "Male and Female Roles" Addison writes of the "Party-Rage" which he felt was unbecoming in women:

This is, in its nature, a Male Vice, and made up of many angry and cruel Passions that are altogether repugnant to the Softness, the Modesty, and those other endearing Qualities which are natural to the Fair Sex. Women were formed to

temper Mankind, and sooth them into Tenderness and Compassion. (Addison, The Spectator: "Male and female roles" 5 May 1711)

It is interesting that Russell takes this masculine tradition, and in using it to her own ends turns the tables on Steele and Addison. Many of her "Spec-tatler" columns reveal a patronizing attitude toward men. In a discussion over whether or not delaying the referendum was a plot to further the Confederate cause, Portia tells Mrs. Bloggs, "Some of our leading men say so, you know." To this Mrs. Bloggs replies: "Listen, Portia. Not being a leading man, perhaps you'll be able to understand common sense" (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs and the Sinister Plot" 16 Aug. 1947). Bloggs' tone is similarly patronizing when she explains to Portia, with a "tolerant smile," that the Convention delegates can't agree with each other "because the dear boys only look at their own side of the argument" (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs Talks About Tariffs" 22 Feb. 1947). Even Mr. Smallby, one of the men in Russell's cast of characters, recognizes the intelligence of Portia over his male companion Mr. Average Citizen. At the end of a heated debate Smallby turns away from Average and says, "I'll talk to Portia instead. She can understand plain, sensible talk" (Russell, "The Spec-tatler: Mr. Smallby and Average Disagree Violently" 18 May 1946).

Russell's "Spec-tatler" also addresses the issue of duality in women's writing. The title is in one sense a form of double-talk. It obviously refers to the works of Steele and Addison, drawing her title from pieces of theirs. In a second sense, however, it may be seen to draw on the tradition of the muted women's culture. Both halves of the title imply something of the nature of women's talk. The "Spec" taken from The Spectator implies an image of a woman looking, watching, perhaps spying or looking for gossip. Its connotation in this sense is more venomous than the way Mr. Spectator intended it:

In short, where-ever I see a Cluster of People I always mix with them, though I never open my Lips but in my own Club.

Thus I live in the World, rather as a Spectator of Mankind, than as one of the Species; by which means I have made my self a Speculative Statesman, Soldier, Merchant and Artizan, without ever meddling with any Practical Part in my Life.

(Addison, The Spectator: "Mr. Spectator Introduces Himself" 1 Mar. 1711)

Portia, in fact, takes on the role of an active, intrusive spectator or nosey reporter. She routinely pumps her circle of friends and neighbours for opinions on current events, which they often find accounts of in next Saturday's

paper. In a February 1946 column, Portia is pictured chasing down Mr. Smallby to continue their discussion of the trade war. When he tells her that he has to bowl that night she "wails," "But Mr. Smallby . . . . You must tell me. You see, I've been putting it all in my column, and how can I possibly hold up my head if I just drop the subject." She asks "in desperation," "Couldn't I see you between frames if I were to go down?" (Russell, "Spec-tatler" 23 Feb. 1946). On another occasion Hiram Hodclop tells her, "I've read that column you write and I think you picked a fine name for it. Spectatler! You certainly do tell all you see, and I'm afraid if I talk to you I'll be reading all about myself in next Saturday's Evening Telegram" (Russell, "Spec-tatler" 26 Jan. 1946).

Similarly the second half of the title "tatler" implies women's talk, idle chit-chat, and gossip. This, in fact, seems to match the original intent of the title. Steele, in his first column, "The plan of The Tatler" writes: "I resolve also to have something which may be of Entertainment to the Fair Sex, in Honour of whom I have invented the Title of this Paper" (Steele, The Tatler: "The Plan of The Tatler" 12 Apr. 1709). In writing this he acknowledges the importance of women readers and buyers of magazines.

Russell explores this notion of women's talk in her descriptive terms. "I'm afraid," Portia says, "we chatter a



great deal at our Women's Club meetings" (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs Gets an Idea" 16 Mar. 1946). She reports that "Average looked grumpily at me as I chattered on" (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Just Politics" 2 June 1947). Similarly she refers to Average when she says "I suppose he just can't be bothered stopping to gossip with a woman" (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Average Looks at Washington" 19 Apr. 1947). Ironically, the "chit-chat" Portia engages her friends in is anything but idle; in fact, together they often discuss the most pressing political problems of the day. Although she speaks of the "chattering" at the Women's Club meetings, Mrs. Bloggs reminds her that "when Mrs. Haughty taps that heel for silence, we all drop our conversation and put our minds to our business" (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs Gets an Idea" 16 Mar. 1946). In fact, the Women's Club is shown to be an organization in which women accomplish a great deal together. And though Portia speaks of Average having to listen to her "chatter" on, in other contexts she shows herself to be superior to Average in knowledge and intellect. She opens one of her columns, for instance, by referring to a previous argument with Mr. Average Citizen which she won: "I knew he'd never be happy until he got it back on me. Mr. Average Citizen doesn't like to be beaten in an argument, especially by a woman" (Russell, "Spec-tatler" 1 Dec. 1945).

The duality of women's writing voice is illustrated in this column where Russell draws largely from the literary tradition of the dominant culture, yet manipulates the form to suit the needs and tradition of her muted female culture. We may see the same process at work in a short story called "The Sight of Seals." Here Russell tells a story about two women within the bounds of a very masculine tradition and setting. In this story there is the familiar tale of young love thwarted by parental disapproval which is eventually overcome when the young lover proves his worth through some physical demonstration of strength or manliness. The difference in Russell's work is that she inverts the traditional story by making the disapproving parental figure a matriarch instead of a male head of household, and the disapproved of young lover a young woman and not a young man.

The story begins with Big Martha, family and community matriarch. "The Cove knew her for a strong, harsh woman, but one to whom you turned in trouble, whose word was law, and whose laws were wise" (Russell, "Sight of Seals" 2). Interestingly, Big Martha's characteristics are more those expected of the traditional strong man, instead of the strong woman. She runs her home "efficiently, and with a firm hand" (Russell, "Sight of Seals" 1-2). "She was independent and dependable, and the equal of any two men in

the place" (Russell, "Sight of Seals" 2). Big Martha is described physically in very masculine terms. She was a "big-muscled, broad-shouldered woman, who stood six feet tall. She moved slowly and ponderously, but with unmistakable decisiveness. Every inch of her solid body expressed energy" (Russell, "Sight of Seals" 1).

By contrast, her son's girlfriend is described as "tiny, trim, vivacious and golden haired" (Russell, "Sight of Seals" 7). Carrie Moncton is a school teacher from the city and Martha feels that a woman full of strength and used to hard work would be a much greater asset to her son in running the family business than a woman full of book learning. As with many male-centred stories, it is only after Carrie proves herself against the environment that she wins approval. When Josh, hunting seals, becomes trapped on floes which are being drawn out to sea, Carrie runs with a piece of rope to a point of land where she can reach him and pull him to safety. She notices Josh missing before Big Martha and her journey over the rough, snow-covered terrain is successful while Martha's pursuit of Josh by boat is not. After proving herself fit for survival in the outports, Carrie is granted Big Martha's approval.

A culture-based theory of women's writing voice, as explained by Elaine Showalter, would have Dora Russell participating in both the traditions of the dominant male

culture and a muted female culture. Russell's editorials, profiles, and short fiction all demonstrate evidence of this simultaneous participation. The double voiced discourse which results from this cultural position has meant that Russell's subjects, values, and literary forms are drawn from both traditions. At times this results in unusual combinations and contradictory ideologies. It often creates a reading experience where one must examine the balance between conflicting values and look to the sub-text of a work in order to find meaning too controversial for the surface of the text.

#### CHAPTER 4: INFLUENCE OF GENRE AND AUDIENCE

What was the impact of genre and audience on Dora Russell's writing voice? From the poststructuralist critical perspective most writers' voices are shaped by a variety of forces and Russell's is no exception. In the previous chapter the theoretical perspective of feminist poststructuralism was used to illuminate the impact of simultaneous participation in both dominant male and muted female cultures on Dora Russell's writing voice. This theory helps explain the apparent duality and contradictions in Russell's work and ideologies. While these social and cultural forces appear to have had a major influence on Russell's voice, the constraints of genre and the expectations of the audience also play a significant role in shaping Russell's work.

Because Russell wrote in a wide spectrum of genres including editorial, profile, fictional diary, short fiction, drama, and straight political reporting, her work provides great opportunity to explore not only what each genre offers the woman writer, but how the writer uses each. Audience, of course, is an important factor here as well. There is much evidence to suggest that Russell's voice changes according to genre and perceived audience. Whether her work was intended for consumption by the dominant male culture or the muted women's culture appears to have had a

significant impact on voice; style, rhetorical structures, and content all change.

The composition of Russell's audience may only be determined by speculation. During the 1940s the Evening Telegram was one of only two St. John's daily papers, implying a relatively large audience in the city and outside. Russell's coverage of the National Convention news would certainly have reached a large, mainstream, male audience across the province. The audience for her Page for Women, however, may be more difficult to determine.

Her articles seem to be aimed at women across the province instead of an exclusively urban audience. Though Russell lived and worked in St. John's, she interviewed visiting women from other parts of the island and Labrador. She also wrote about organizations which provided services in communities throughout the province. Likewise, issues covered in "The Woman's Angle" call women and women's groups across the province to take action. Russell also addressed issues specific to the outport audience, such as the importance of making high quality dried salt cod (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: The Fisherman's Part" 5 Aug. 1947). A letter which appeared in "In the Mail Box" on April 3, 1946 from "Outporter" further suggests that Russell was successful in reaching Newfoundland's outport population:

And we outport women work pretty hard and don't

have much time for the softer things of life, even if they are important. So keep up the good work. We are all behind you.

As both a mother and a member of the paid work force, Russell's columns seem to address both young working women, as well as mothers and homemakers. Many of those profiled in "Woman of the Week" were young career-oriented women. Russell's fictional diary, however, appears to target a slightly more mature audience who worked and parented in the home. Though Russell's writing voice changes to suit the different levels of education such audiences likely possessed, it must be noted that a fair degree of literacy would be required of any reader. Therefore, it is possible that unless reading was part of social gatherings and group meetings, that low levels of literacy among the poor and among outport dwellers may have limited Russell's intended audience.

Russell's most mainstream writings were her National Convention reports from 1946 to 1948. In the "Convention Proceedings" she reported the daily events and debates taking place at the Convention for those who could not be present. Topics were strictly limited to the business of the Convention's public sessions. This included detailed coverage of speeches and debates, as well as discussions of numerous reports on issues like Transportation and

Communications, Public Health, Mining, Economics, and the reports of Committees such as the Agricultural Committee, Fisheries Committee, Education and Forestry Committees. The presentation of such reports opened debate, as did motions put forward by members of the Convention. Motions dealt with issues as important as whether or not delegates would be sent to Britain, Canada, and the United States and whether or not Confederation would appear on the ballot paper. The most formal of Russell's writing, these columns are dominated by fact while personal voice retreats. They conform to the conventions of the political writing genre in that the vast majority of text reports the speeches and debates in a comprehensive, objective, and factual manner. Significantly, the strong feminist writing voice so prominent in her other works is suppressed. Facts and technical skills dominate where the author's voice and values dominate in other columns:

The afternoon session of the National Convention began by the Assembly going into a Committee of the Whole to further discuss the terms of Confederation, and the debate began with a discussion on the 1st section of clause 4 which deals with Family Allowances. Mr. Baily, opening the debate, was of the opinion that Mr. Smallwood was wrong, and family allowances were not paid for



by the rich, but by everyone, through the .8% Sales Tax, which is levied on many consumer goods in Canada. (Russell, "Terms Debate Continues" 25 Nov. 1947)

Dale Spender reports that "According to Shirley Ardner, the male control of meaning extends to the *registers* of public discourse so that it is both the meaning and the *form* in which that meaning is expressed (in public discourse) that has been encoded by men and is controlled by men" (Spender 78). For this reason it becomes necessary for the woman writer to translate female experience into male defined forms. Such a process, according to Ardner, often blocks women's meanings (qtd. in Spender 81). No doubt it also leads to subversive variations and deviations from traditional form.

There is evidence that Russell manipulates many literary forms to suit her feminine writing voice; the genre of political reporting appears to be an exception, however. Stylistically, it is virtually the same as most other political writing and devoid of many of the rhetorical structures which occur in her other columns such as sarcasm, irony and parallel structure which will be explored in more detail later.

An examination of Russell's political writing in relation to her "Woman's Angle" columns which comment on

many of the same issues brings to light the constraints genre placed on voice. In the editorial, "Ah-Men," for instance, Russell addresses the stubborn nature of the delegates:

Two months ago, over the minor issue of a Bradley motion they lined up 29 against 16. The debate on the final Smallwood motion was a good one. It was lively, eloquent and thorough. But did a single one of those men change his opinion? Not at all. There they are, at the end, each man stubbornly hanging to opinions that had been ripped to shreds by his opponents time and time again. They ended 29 to 16. What a record for any convocation of stubborn women to aim at! (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Ah-Men" 29 Jan. 1948)

In her straight report of this event, however, she simply writes "The motion was then put and defeated by 29 votes to 16. The following members voted for the motion . . . . The following members voted against it . . ." (Russell, "Motion Recommend Confederation Defeated" 28 Jan. 1948). This coverage is neutral and devoid of the obviously strong opinions expressed in "Ah-Men."

"Parliamentary (?) Procedure" provides another opportunity for comparison. This editorial refers back to "Thursday's debate on the mining report." Russell expresses

her disgust with the delegates who create disorder by disrespectfully interrupting and contradicting each other. Her coverage of the debate in "Proceedings at the National Convention," however, conceals her views and presents only relevant material in a factual manner. In a discussion of whether the Newfoundland government was getting its share of the profit from the Buchans mine she reports the events of the debate as follows:

Mr. Smallwood was getting hot under the collar, and he suggested that a discussion on the amount of royalties payable to Newfoundland would be deferred until the remaining sections of the report had been discussed. As a final point Mr. Hollett said that the ore was no good in the ground . . . . Mr. Smallwood repeated his statement that the government was letting the companies off too lightly, and were not asking them to pay their just amounts into the revenue of the country. (Russell, "Proceedings at the National Convention" 11 Apr. 1947)

While the tone of "Convention Proceedings" is noticeably restrained compared to her other work, to say that Russell's values and opinions are completely absent in her political reporting would be inaccurate. Many of the views which Russell directly expressed in her editorials are

implicitly expressed in her National Convention reports. Values emerge implicitly in Russell's choice of diction and presentation of material. Again, a comparison between her editorials and political reports is instructive. On 6 November 1946 Russell's editorial "A Dream of Fair Women" describes the unbecoming behaviour of delegates at the Convention: "When men bicker, they take great care to do it in such a gentlemanly way that it is not easy to pin the blame on them." In the "Proceedings at the National Convention" which precedes this editorial, Russell's word choice, presentation, and details selected demonstrate the petty bickering nature of the debate:

When Mr. Smallwood turned his blast of rhetoric on Mr. Hollett, the latter objected to Mr. Smallwood using his name. It was a point of parliamentary procedure he said, by district rather than by name, that members refer to one another. The chairman reminded Mr. Hollett that this Convention was no parliament and that therefore, Mr. Smallwood had every right to refer to any delegate by name. (Russell, "Proceedings at the National Convention" 5 Nov. 1946)

Smallwood responds to accusations that he offered Hollett a senatorship:

"I did not offer anyone senatorship," declared Mr.

Smallwood, "because first, because I had no senatorship to offer, second because any offer I might make would be something on a much lower level than a senatorship."

Warning Mr. Smallwood to be careful, the chairman said there were to be no aspersions cast or personalities exchanged. (Russell, "Proceedings at the National Convention" 5 Nov. 1946)

Later Convention reports reveal some of the same womanly impatience with the male delegates that her editorials express. One subtitle, for instance, reads "Session starts Quietly, Degenerates as Tempers Fray-- Smallwood Challenges Fudge to Settle Difference Outside of Chamber, Later Threatens Resign Seat; Reneges on both Occasions." (Russell, "Convention Proceedings" 6 Jan. 1948). It is important to note, however, that this slip in Russell's objectivity is not a demonstration of feminine writing voice. In fact, it does not deviate at all from the local interpretation of this literary genre. "Convention Proceedings" from the Daily News also reveal the same impatience and implicit judgement that Russell's column's reveal.

In covering the resignation of Mr. Bradley as chairman of the National Convention, for instance, there is great

similarity in the tone of both papers. The Daily News opens with the front page headline: "Chairman National Convention Resigns in Uproarious Session." The column begins: "At yesterday [sic] meeting, the first for over three months, the National Convention broke up in confusion and disorder and is now without a Chairman" (Daily News 11 Oct. 1947). Similarly, the Evening Telegram opens with the headline, "Gordon Bradley Resigns" and the subheading, "Bradley Resigns as Chair and Meeting ends in Confusion--Ottawa Report laid on Table." Russell's column begins, "The first meeting of the National Convention since the last week in May ended in uproar yesterday as Bradley forestalled a notice of no confidence motion and resigned the Chair leaving the Convention without a chairman" (Russell, 11 Oct. 1947). Both columns express implicit disapproval and make the Convention's proceedings look childish and disorderly in their use of terms such terms as "confusion" and "uproar."

Coverage of the November 22, 1947 debate again reveals a similar tone in both papers. Though Russell's coverage is factual, her headline implies disapproval of delegates' behaviour: "Clause Three and Part Clause Four Canadian Terms Debated--Members Very Touchy, Debate Heated at Times for No Reason" (Russell, "Proceedings at the National Convention" 22 Nov. 1947). Likewise, her counterpart at the Daily News begins his report:

Pandemonium broke loose at yesterday's session of the National Convention when Gordon F. Higgins and J. R. Smallwood came to verbal blows during the consideration of the proposals received from Ottawa concerning Confederation.

("Convention Proceedings" Daily News 22 Nov. 1947)

.....

When the session was drawing to a close there were heated verbal exchanges between Mr. Smallwood, Mr. Higgins and Mr. Hollett. The chairman reiterated that he would not permit these exchanges which were irrelevant to the discussion, and would enforce the ruling he had already set.

("Convention Proceedings" Daily News 22 Nov. 1947)

It is interesting to note that Russell's collection of "Convention Proceedings" in scrapbooks 10.07 and 10.08 include clippings from both the Evening Telegram and the Daily News. Perhaps Russell was herself making comparisons between her own coverage and that provided by the other paper. It is possible that this comparison also included a study of the style and tone of the other. Perhaps she used the writings of her counterpart as a guide, as a way of establishing the acceptable boundaries for making value judgements, or perhaps she was simply interested in the parallel coverage. It is clear from her other columns that

she read the Daily News and commented on its reports. An editorial on the 29th of January, 1948 called "What Now?" for instance, prompts Mrs. Bloggs to say, "The Daily News . . . as usual, is taking more upon itself than it has the right to do" (Russell, "Spec-tatler: Mrs. Bloggs is Sleepy" 31 Jan. 1948).

Although Russell is restrained by the conventions of political reporting in "Convention Proceedings," it is clear that while she does not directly comment, her values are implicit in some of her political material. In the "Woman's Angle," however, Russell harshly criticizes members of the Convention for their pointless bickering, poor behaviour and manners. Although she does not venture such an opinion in "Convention Proceedings," the same thoughts are obviously present and surface as much as this genre allows.

Just as the proceedings of the National Convention dominated Newfoundland's political life in the late 1940s, they were also among the topics which kept recurring in Russell's editorials. Over thirty percent of Russell's editorials dealt with politics. As in "Convention Proceedings," these editorials keep up with the latest events and issues, such as the Family Allowance debate, the departures and returns of various delegations to Canada and England, their achievements, and whether Confederation would or should be on the ballot paper. Her goals here are



different, however. In the editorials, as in most editorial writing, Russell offers some opinion or perspective on the issues covered. Her editorials, however, differ from others in that her goal is not to display her own wit and intelligence or to necessarily win people over to her way of thinking, but rather to inform and open space for debate among and with readers.

That Russell's "Page for Women" was not a forum for convincing others to take a particular stand on the issues debated at the Convention becomes evident in an address to Daily News columnist Wayfarer (Albert Perlin). Upon beginning his long series of letters on Confederation, Perlin informed readers that

he intended to present an objective case. By the second or third letter he had become a rabid partisan who looked with complete contempt and derision at those petty and ill-informed mortals who dared suggest that Confederation was something we should allow ourselves to be railroaded into.

(Hollohan and Baker 25)

When Perlin confuses the opinion of one of Russell's fictional characters, Mr. Bloggs, with her personal views and writes that Russell agrees that Confederation should not be on the ballot paper, Russell quickly corrects him. She scolds him for not being able to distinguish the values of a

fictional character from those of the author. She further denies that the opinion expressed was her own:

Indeed we venture to say that in no newspaper in the country is such freedom of thought and difference of opinion so liberally permitted expression as may be found on this page. This is, of course, consistent with the unbiased attitude of this paper, whose desire it is to assist the people to a better understanding of ALL aspects of the problem confronting [sic] us, rather than favour one form of government to the exclusion of all arguments, however forceful, that may bolster other forms. (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Fictional Characters" CNS Archives, collection 89, files 10.03-10.04)

Clearly Russell intends here to draw attention to the fact that both the Daily News and Perlin were advocating a return to responsible government while the Evening Telegram was remaining neutral on the issue. She perhaps even parodies Perlin's grandiose style by using the "royal we" in "We venture to say . . . ." It is known that Russell did support Confederation with Canada and eventually left the Evening Telegram because it refused to support one form of government over the other. This, however, does not change the tone and intent of "The Woman's Angle" which evidently

conformed to the paper's policy.

In this column the writer takes on the role of teacher more than politician. While we know that Russell did favour Confederation with Canada, her columns remain a place where issues and perspectives are brought forward rather than one where opinions are forcefully advanced. That her intent and audience are different than in her other columns is evident. While the "Convention Proceedings" implies a sophisticated and male-dominated reading audience, the less technical nature, and especially the conversational tone of "The Woman's Angle," implies a column written for other women and readers with less education. The editorial allows Russell more freedom to address the muted groups in society using more familiar tones and styles. Here Russell breaks down the technical material from the Convention for those who did not have the time, interest, or possibly the ability to pursue the material themselves. In response to her editorial "Concerning the Act Relating to the National Convention," in which she summarizes the lengthy Act, one reader responds:

I wish to thank you for the article in your column on Monday . . . . I am one of those women who extracted the lengthy Bill from the newspaper and put it away with the mental resolve to read it some day . . . . I felt that here was something

that I just must read and yet it was rather long and would take so much time from my busy day. Now you can understand my pleasure on reading your summary of the Bill. ("Regular Reader" 15 Apr. 1946)

In "The Woman's Angle" Russell presents the complex and abstract ideas of "Convention Proceedings" in terms of their practical implications. The issue of Family Allowances seems to have been the centre of great debate both at the National Convention and in the local media. Here, Russell takes the conflicting points of view expressed at the Convention and by other writers and places them in the context of everyday life. She summarizes the Family Allowance as an attempt to bridge the gap "between the man who has a family to support and the man who has neither chick nor child to worry his head about" (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Family Allowances" 14 Aug. 1946):

[T]he man with a family to support must have some means of equalization of income with the man who, earning the same wages, has no one but himself to care for. Family allowances are designed to do this. (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Family Allowances Again" 20 Jan. 1948).

By explaining the issue through its practical impact on the individual and the family, Russell makes the topic more

immediate and concrete.

By comparison, Albert Perlin's account of the family allowance issue is based on the political debate rather than the practical implications. While Russell's focus is obviously the average family and how it will be affected, Perlin's use of the card playing metaphor implies that he sees politics and this particular issue more as a game than a process which seriously affects people's lives. It is interesting to note that his account is presented in a much more formal tone. He uses metaphor as opposed to Russell's more homely language:

On the question of welfare services the provision of family allowances is the ace in the Confederate hand. To decry the value of that particular social service would be absurd . . . . But there are two points that may be stressed. One is that no social benefits are obtainable without payment in one form or another.

The second point is that the particular aim of family allowances may be worked out on a more satisfactory basis having in mind the special requirements of this country, by a Newfoundland Government. It is not beyond our fiscal capacity if our finances are better organized than they are at the present time when no surplus appears in

sight in spite of a revenue of \$40 million in prospect.

Although Russell's writing did not actively support one form of government over another, and the "Woman's Angle" helped reduce complex issues to a more accessible level, the columns are not devoid of Russell's biases. While she refrains from vigorously promoting her political opinions, her personal philosophies are evident in her writing. The above discussion of Family Allowances, for instance, definitely promotes Russell's socialist values through her concern that some effort be made to equalize standards of living.

Russell's feelings about the political events of the day surface in other ways as well. In "The Woman's Angle" the reader becomes privy to the many thoughts which must have been running through Russell's mind as she sat through endless sessions of the National Convention. While in "Convention Proceedings" she reported the facts and events as objectively as possible, in "The Woman's Angle" she attempted to evaluate and change the proceedings of the Convention. From the editorials, it would seem that Russell's two main complaints with the proceedings of the National Convention were the absence of women participating in the proceedings and the unruly and inappropriate behaviour of delegates.

Russell laments the lack of women in columns such as "Our Place is There," "A Dream of Fair Women," "A Convention of Women," and "Convention Capers." Later she contents herself to have women play as active a role as they can, despite the fact that they have no presence in the convention. She concludes:

They are our responsibility, those delegates, and since we failed to put a few women among them to keep them on the right track, we must needs do our guidance act in the only way left--through criticism. (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: The Bottom of the Class" 23 May 1947)

Just as she suggests, Russell sets about trying to influence the proceedings of the Convention through criticism. Her sarcasm and suggestions that women are superior seem aimed at shaming delegates into more appropriate behaviour. Her main criticisms of the delegates were their unruly behaviour and their straying from the Convention's mandate. Through these subjects we may also examine the emerging writing voice and the different rhetorical devices and tones which further separate these writings from her mainstream political reports. As such rhetorical devices indicate, Russell appears to have become radicalized by watching the behaviour of National Convention delegates.

In "Parliamentary (?) Procedure" Russell takes on the

childish and disruptive behaviour of delegates at the Convention:

One delegate who tried to express his views on a section of the report was interrupted about a dozen times. These interruptions ranged from blunt contradictions to remarks on such irrelevant things as the Irish sweepstake.

.....

What we would like to defend is any delegate's right to express his opinion on the subject under debate. And to do so without persistent interruptions, which are certainly not orderly, and which, over the airwaves, hardly sound even courteous. (Russell, "The Woman's Angle:

Parliamentary (?) Procedure" 12 Apr. 1947)

Russell not only expresses her disapproval of delegate conduct, but she sets up the column in such a framework as to shame the delegates themselves. "There are things about men's activities," she writes in "Parliamentary (?) Procedure," "that women can admire, and from which they may learn something . . . . Much can be learned--that is, generally. Thursday's debate on the mining report was an exception."

While Russell sought to change existing gender roles, she was equally skilled at making them work to her advantage



by using them to prompt men to more desirable behaviour. With regard to the National Convention, she often attempted to shame delegates by indicating that women could do a better job:

Women are popularly supposed to be illogical. But where in the world would you find any women so illogical as the delegates showed themselves to be?

.....

Women are supposed to be stubborn. It is said (by men) that women stick to their opinions in spite of all arguments. But where in the world could you find women as stubborn as those men proved themselves to be?

.....

Women are supposed to lack respect for facts and figures (statistical ones, we mean). But those men disagreed more widely than women could ever do. (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: Ah-men" 29 Jan. 1948)

In "Convention Capers," Russell comes right out and asks, "One wonders whether a gathering of women would have disgraced themselves so utterly and completely." Russell's tone is sarcastic, scolding and superior.

Undoubtedly, her biggest concern with regard to the

National Convention was the way delegates seemed to quickly lose sight of its mandate. The purpose of the Convention was to examine possible forms of government for the province and to make recommendations as to which forms should appear on the referendum's ballot paper. Russell's reports, however, make it clear that the delegates quickly took sides, choosing to support one form of government over others, as though the goal of the Convention was to actually decide the political future of the island. In "The Bottom of the Class" Russell addresses this problem. Her tone is not neutral, but ironic and scolding. She uses techniques such as rhetorical questions and dashes to emphasize strong points as well as her frustration:

Sternly brushing aside an almost irresistible impulse to line the delegates up in a row and teach them their lesson, which, despite months of study, they have not succeeded in mastering, we content ourselves with rather wearily pointing out, again, that the function of the Convention is to examine, and to recommend. Would the class kindly repeat those words one hundred times?--to examine, and to recommend.

Taking on the persona of a schoolmarm Russell develops a very reductive image of the delegates. Again Russell uses the gender hierarchy against men by turning it upside down

to admonish them, adding "Of course, we women realize that the delegates are only men" (Russell, "The Woman's Angle: The Bottom of the Class" 23 May 1947).

It is obvious then, that content, tone, style, and rhetorical techniques vary widely across genre and according to intended audience, even when the content is the same. The formal structure of straight political reporting, aimed at a sophisticated, educated audience allows for only minimal and implicit expression of voice and elaboration beyond the basic facts. The more flexible structure of the editorial, however, allows Russell's own values and judgements to surface. Her tone changes from neutral and varies tremendously from column to column and issue to issue. She also uses a variety of techniques such as the rhetorical question to emphasize important points and to interest and entertain the reader. The presentation of the same issues which appear in "Convention Proceedings" implies a different audience, or one with different interests than that of her straight political reporting. Russell tries to make sense of the issues and debates for the reader instead of merely setting out the conflicting facts. Her own values inevitably enter these columns, whereas they are relatively repressed in the "Convention Proceedings."

"Woman of the Week" is another of Russell's columns in which her values penetrate the form. Here she manipulates

the form in order to allow her own voice, values, and interests to emerge. Even though the columns are essentially individual profiles, some reach beyond the straight facts of the subject's life.

Perhaps the most striking feature of these profiles is that instead of merely relaying the facts of a woman's life, Russell also records the woman's voice. Large portions of the "Woman of the Week" are composed of direct quotations from the subjects. In addition to factual material, these quotations capture aims and aspirations, life philosophies, and attitudes. Russell, for instance, records the aspirations of Miss Monnie G. Mansfield, Registrar and Dean of Women at Memorial University:

I would like to see everybody with a college education. Here, we teach the students how to think. They have the benefit of meeting people from other parts of the Island, and they gain from the inter-association of ideas. College life is good for this reason alone. (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Monnie Mansfield" 1 Feb. 1947)

Similarly, Grace Butt, actor and playwright, shares with Russell and her readers the goal of the St. John's Players: "Our aim is to build up a tradition through creative activity" (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Grace Butt" 15 Dec. 1945).

Other women told their stories and relayed their values in their own voices through Russell's column. For instance, newspaper woman Mrs. Lewis Brookes tells of her experiences reporting during the war:

'I saw the terrible beatings of the Jews in Berlin,' she continued her story. 'Even the children were held up to watch the beatings. It shook me to the core, and I still wonder when people talk of being friends with the Germans again. They are an arrogant hateful people, and they hate us!' (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Mrs. Lewis Brookes" 28 Dec. 1946)

The horror of the war experience from the view of Miss Muriel Rabbitts, R.N. is similarly immediate when Russell gives Rabbitts' voice a place in her column:

'It was awful!' said Miss Rabbitts, very seriously '"awful" is the sort of word one uses without realizing the dreadful meaning behind it. "Awful" things happen only in books, never to people. but it all did happen, to lots and lots of people.' (Russell, "Woman of the Week: Muriel Rabbitts" 30 Mar. 1946)

Because of the strong presence of the subject's voice the profiles feel more personal and are in many ways more immediate and informative than, for instance, the profiles

of both Monnie Mansfield and Grace Butt given in The Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador, even though these entries list more comprehensively a lifetime of accomplishments for both women. For instance, of Monnie Mansfield, the Encyclopedia records:

Registrar; dean. Born Boston. Educated Boston; St. Bride's College, Littledale; Columbia University. Mansfield worked at Memorial University College for three decades as secretary to President J.L. Paton, as registrar and as dean of women. (Krachun)

While an Encyclopedia entry strives for objectivity, Russell's profiles are subjective and stress an alternative set of facts. Russell manipulates the profile genre to her own end through her choice of facts. Like an Encyclopedia entry, her work meticulously records a woman's education, work history, and special honours. Often, however, these are secondary to an alternative group of facts which Russell records.

Dr. Stella Burry is one such example. An entry in The Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador lists her as a Deaconess and social worker. It lists her place of birth, the institution at which she was educated, her eight years of teaching and the Newfoundland communities in which she taught. It also discusses her work in Toronto and St.

John's under the United Church, all of which preceded Russell's interview (Stockwood). Russell too, briefly outlines most of this information in her opening paragraph. Her focus, however, becomes the community centre Burry and her group were about to open, as well as the work she had done in a Toronto community centre. It would seem that the services this new centre aimed to provide for women, such as shelter for outport girls who had come to the city to work, become at least as important as the achievements of Miss Burry.

Similarly, Russell's column on Miss Monnie Mansfield goes beyond the mere facts outlined in The Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador entry. While Miss Mansfield's work experience at the university is recorded, far more attention is given to her contact with the students:

Miss Mansfield's account of her work as Registrar and Dean of Women leaves no doubt that it far more than handling money and adding up figures [sic]. There is the constant contact with the students, which she loves, and the help which she gives them in their period of adjustment.

(Russell, "Woman of the Week: Monnie Mansfield" 1 Feb. 1947)

By choosing to emphasize an alternative set of facts from those normally chosen for prominence, Russell

manipulates a traditional literary genre to accommodate her own needs. Concerned that women did not have a strong enough voice in Newfoundland society, Russell re-creates the voice of each woman on paper. Also concerned with bringing women's values into the public realm, she deliberately focuses on issues in these women's lives which are important to her and her readers, and which she felt should be praised and promoted.

Despite Russell's re-shaping the form to suit her own aims, when compared with some of her other columns, "Woman of the Week" does reveal genre-imposed restraint. While the content shows variation from the more traditional form, style and rhetorical techniques remain traditional. The writer, for instance, remains largely invisible, only interjecting herself or her opinion on a rare occasion. Also the style of the articles is very traditional. Compared to "The Woman's Angle" where Russell used a variety of tones, and devices such as dashes and rhetorical questions to amuse the reader and to emphasize points, the prose style of "Woman of the Week" is quite bland, far more like that of "Convention Proceedings." Russell's voice emerges in "Woman of the Week" only through content and the values implicit in that content.

Russell's fictional diary column, Day By Day, returns to the more expressive style achieved in "The Woman's



Angle." Again the style is much less formal, as might be expected of a diary entry format. Russell's use of rhetorical techniques for emphasis and entertainment also returns. We see certain information being emphasized with the use of dashes or parentheses. She emphasizes Mary's shock at Grandmother Smith's fashion sense, for instance, with a carefully placed dash: "none of your drab colours for her. She dotes on vivid greens and blues and purples--yes, and reds" (Russell, Day by Day 10 Mar. 1946).

For the most part the sentences in Day by Day are quite short. Russell seems to use these for quick movement and a fast pace, also to emphasize the comedy of certain situations and draws attention and adds impact to certain information. For instance, she says of Grannie Smith: "She will never wear the same dress two days in a row and always changes three times a day. At least" (Russell, Day by Day 10 Mar. 1946). Similarly, when she introduces herself and the family in the first entry she reports:

Linda, Daphne and Judy do not agree. They  
want a new baby.

Not me. Three is enough. (Russell, Day by Day 1  
Jan. 1946)

As in "The Woman's Angle," Russell also uses a variety of tones here to punctuate the pieces. One of the many appeals this column may have held for Russell's female

readers was the undercurrent of frustration directed toward the often inconsiderate husband figure. The tone of restrained resentment is one which not only adds variety, but also tension to the pieces. In this example the narrator's tone is evident; it is also effectively portrayed through the use of extra information in parenthesis:

There is one time of the year when John is completely happy. That is when he first gets the "fishing fever."

He came home from work today and before even sitting down to his supper, asked if I knew where his flies were and why wasn't his fishing rod where he had put it last fall (it was, of course) and would I go down to the basement and see if his reel was in the trunk with the summer things. Had I sent his long rubber boots out to be mended? (I had, although he hadn't as much as mentioned it before, but I've lived through a good many springs with John and I know just how things go about the 22nd. of May). (Russell, Day by Day 22 May 1946)

In this passage she uses the regular text to show John's behaviour, while using the parenthesis to frame her response to him. The placement of her response in parenthesis gives the impression that her words are never spoken; instead they are suppressed thoughts. It also suggests a superiority on

Mary's part since the parenthesis suggest an orderliness and organization. Mary has anticipated and prepared for this May 22nd event while John is in total disarray.

Dale Spender reports that for a variety of reasons "[w]omen may feel 'at home' with 'the art of conversation' but men may feel 'at home' with 'the art of rhetoric' or 'the art of persuasion'" (78). It is perhaps for this reason that this more conversational genre appears to offer Russell more flexibility than the other three. The style of the pieces reveals a far more relaxed and informal attitude. Likewise, the audience for this column may have allowed a more informal piece of writing. We may be sure that men read and perhaps constituted the majority of readers for "Convention Proceedings," and there is evidence that men read "The Woman's Angle" since occasional feedback letters in "In the Mailbox" were written by men (Male Reader). It would seem likely, however, that while men may have read this column that women would compose the largest portion of her audience. The expectations and rhetorical preferences of each group may account for the differences in Russell's style.

It is perhaps because of the high number of women readers that Day by Day, more than any of her other works focuses on family, specifically children. While family matters and issues are at times discussed in "The Woman's

Angle," never are the daily activities and relationships explored in such detail. Russell's readers no doubt appreciated and recognized elements of their own family in Mary Smith's girls. Linda Mae is "ten and quite a grown-up young lady. Or at least, she has grown-up ideas" (Russell, Day by Day 1 Jan. 1946). "Judy, the littlest one of the family, is five years old. She is bawling at the top of her voice" (Russell, Day by Day 1 Jan. 1946). "The remaining member of the family is Daphne . . . Daffy is the mischief maker in this family. She should have been born a boy, for she gives such a good imitation of one that I have never really been sorry that our family did not include a boy" (Russell, Day by Day 1 Jan. 1946).

Taking her reader into the everyday life of the Smith family, Russell reflects the family relationships and daily routines of many of her readers. Both the mundane and the exceptional. She shows the children's ability to make daily events anything but boring. The reader is left with the impression that Mary finds her children at times both humorous and embarrassing. When Daffy insists on singing "she'll be coming 'round the mountain when she comes" during a hymn in church, Mary reports: "The hymn ended with a reverent Amen, and Daffy's voice, still lifted in song, trailed off a little uncertainly but nonetheless conspicuously, 'She'll be coming 'round the mountain when

she comes.' It is fortunate for my peace of mind that I have a sense of humour" (Russell, Day by Day 25 Jan. 1946).

Although Russell wrote about and supported women's domestic role, she was also a strong supporter of women in public life and in government. Other columns support women in their roles at home, but also challenge the restrictions of traditional roles and provide role models who took their skills beyond their homes. Russell herself was one such woman, successfully operating in both private and public spheres. For these reasons, and also because Day by Day is based on Russell's own situation as a homemaker, which eventually included participation in the workforce, it seems surprising that narrator Mary Smith does not participate in public life. Mary's trip out to vote on June 22nd is her only participation in public life recorded. Not even Grannie, who one may argue is more of a role model than Mary, is active beyond the household and her social gatherings.

Russell sub-titles the collection "Pages from the Diary of a Newfoundland Woman." Why does she then omit the public part of Newfoundland women's lives? Perhaps audience is the answer. Russell and the women she profiled in "Woman of the Week" would probably have been the exception in terms of their participation in the work place, government, or even volunteer services. Perhaps, then, she limits the

experiences of Mary Smith to the domestic world because it reflected the lifestyle of most of her readers. It seems fair to assume that Mary Smith represents Russell's domestic side, perhaps by focusing on this part of her life in isolation from her paid work she is better able to explore the frustrations of this role. A picture of domestic life in which Mary does not participate in the public sphere was also an accurate picture of Russell's life before she began writing with the Telegram.

Russell may also have felt that to emphasize women's public role in the "Pages from the Diary of a Newfoundland Woman" would risk alienating women who operated solely in the private sphere. Instead of trying to encourage women to challenge and expand their roles, as she does in other columns, she may have felt the need to retain reader interest by writing about what her readers knew. Alternately, it is possible that Russell felt that an intense exploration of life in the home was the most effective way to encourage women to seek other options. The most effective way to bring change through this column may have been to explore and acknowledge some of the frustrations of the domestic role, such as the difficult husband figure, the demanding children, confinement and isolation in the home. Perhaps Russell was attempting to break down certain myths about the traditional female role,

to empathize with those in it, and to and warn a younger generation.

It is safe to assume, then, that genre and audience did influence Russell's writing voice. We are fortunate to have several drafts of some of Russell's short fiction which may indeed offer proof of her consciously altering her voice into an acceptable form. "The Week Before Christmas, At Our House" and "The Twelve Days Before Christmas" both examine the days leading up to Christmas in the narrator's house. The events are presented again in diary form, with many entries copied virtually word for word from one version to the other.

The main difference between the two pieces is tone. Both stories document the endless tasks performed by a homemaker in the days leading up to Christmas, as well as the difficulty of performing these tasks with three children underfoot. Both versions express the futility of the endless Christmas cleaning which took place in most homes:

It was indeed high time I got to work to clean up the house for Christmas. Why, I've never exactly understood, since, beginning with Christmas Day, things will be in a greater mess than ever. Nevertheless, in spite of years of experience, I know I shall once more take the covers off the chesterfield, polish up the floors,

rinse the curtains and shine the silver. I shall  
 bake and brew, and I shall starch up my  
 linens . . . . And a few hours later, the fruit  
 bowl will be a mess of orange peel and apple  
 cores. The highly polished floors will be  
 peppered with nut shells and sticky candy  
 wrappers, and the chesterfield covers will draw  
 looks of reproof from visiting relatives, who will  
 surely think that I just didn't bother to clean  
 things up. (Russell, "The Week Before Christmas,  
 At Our House" 9-10)

Russell expresses many of the sentiments associated with  
 what Leslie Bella calls the "Christmas Imperative":

the drive to recreate a familist Christmas, or one  
 in which the traditional nuclear family and the  
 gender roles within it are upheld and women feel  
 the need to orchestrate Christmas for our  
 families--for our husbands and children . . . . As  
 a result, we express frustration at the workload  
 and deplore the lack of appreciation by our  
 menfolk. This frustration produces tension and  
 pain for us as women. (Bella 17 and 18)

While both are stories of harassed housewives, we may  
 speculate that "The Twelve Days Before Christmas," is the  
 second of the two pieces since it lacks some of the more



telltale signs of bitterness present in "The Week Before Christmas, At Our House." It would seem that Russell first wrote "The Twelve Days Before Christmas," then edited out sections she thought her audience would find excessively angry. For instance, "The Twelve Days Before Christmas" does not begin with the exclamation that "We poor housewives are always being badgered to 'get it done before Christmas'" which is the third sentence in "The Week Before Christmas, At Our House." Also noticeably absent is an unpleasant exchange with the narrator's husband, Horace. "'You don't shop properly,' criticized Horace," after the narrator complains of having trouble buying all her gifts. He informs her, "You should organize your shopping, to save time. Anybody with any sense could do all their shopping in one afternoon" (Russell, "The Week Before Christmas, At Our House" 6). The narrator takes Horace up on his assertion and sends him off with a list of purchases to make. When he returns home defeated, she asks "rather nastily, I'm afraid," "'Didn't you get everything?'" (Russell, "The Week Before Christmas, At Our House" 7). The dispute ends: "Horace laid his few packages on the table. 'Do your own shopping from now on,' he snapped" (7). Since "The Twelve Days Before Christmas" contains twelve entries instead of the eight recorded in "The Week Before Christmas, At Our House," it is interesting that this entry, one of the

originals, is omitted. It seems that Russell deliberately excluded it, perhaps because she felt its tone was stronger than was appropriate.

It is clear then, that different audiences and genres altered Russell's writing voice. From Day by Day and Russell's Christmas stories it seems that when writing primarily for women she concentrated on the sense of frustration and anger which can arise from the limited roles designed for women. It is only outside her fictional recreation of women's lives at home that she explicitly expresses her desire to add a place in public to women's place in the domestic sphere. Genre, too, inevitably shaped Russell's voice. More formal genres, such as political reporting and to some extent the profile, almost necessitate the exclusion of the writer's voice. It is interesting, however, to see Russell manipulate traditional genres to suit her purpose and audience. For instance, while profile is intended to be a largely objective form of writing, Russell does implicitly interject her own values and those of her female audience.

## **CHAPTER 5: DORA RUSSELL'S WRITING VOICE AND POSTSTRUCTURALIST THEORY**

Jacques Derrida is one of the leading thinkers associated with poststructuralism. His essay "Structure, Sign and Play" began the critique of structuralism that is at the centre of poststructuralist thought. "Adopting Saussure's notion that the system of language is entirely differential, Derrida goes on to show that such a system cannot be a structure because by definition a structure must be structured and the constant deferral of meaning (signification) from one signifier to another allows for no stoppage, therefore no centre, origin, or totality" (Adams 1116).

Derrida's theory of deconstruction, along with the neo-Freudian theory of Jacques Lacan and the literary criticism of Roland Barthes after about 1973 is frequently called poststructuralism. This term is used because the theory employs the linguistic concepts of Saussure and other aspects of structuralism in a way that undermines the grounds of both Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic system and of structuralism itself. This results in the claim that the meaning of any text remains radically "open" to contradictory readings (Abrams 203).

Poststructuralism's critique of the subject and notions of subjectivity make it an important theory for feminist

criticism. Feminist poststructuralism denies the central humanist assumption that women or men have essential natures. It refuses to accept theories of the feminine psyche or biologically based definitions of femininity which locate its essence in processes such as motherhood or female sexuality. Instead, it insists on the social construction of gender in discourse (Weedon 167). The feminist criticism of Elaine Showalter examines women's writing from the perspective that women are bi-cultural, participating simultaneously in both the dominant male and muted female cultures. A woman writer's voice then, is not the product of an essential femininity, but rather of the social and cultural forces around her.

This has proven to be a useful critical perspective from which to approach the writing of Dora Russell. Russell's voice shows evidence of influence from both male and female cultures, as well as from the social and political trends of her historical period. The topics covered in her columns, as well as the genres in which she writes, include those traditional for both male and female writers. Russell's simultaneous participation in both cultures sometimes causes tension and contradiction in her work.

An examination of Dora Russell's writing voice, then, supports the poststructuralist view that subjectivity is in

process and shaped by cultural forces, rather than a fixed essence. Russell's voice may be seen as a product of social forces such as post-war, pre-Confederation social trends, as well as the competing ideologies of the dominant male culture and the muted female culture. Russell's voice is also a product of the "registers" and "forms" in which it was recorded. Different genres alter her voice, offering it different potentials and possibilities. Likewise, the styles and values comfortable to women writers and readers surface in masculine genres. Russell brings elements of her own gender's literary tradition to the profile and editorial, thus challenging the bounds of traditional forms.

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